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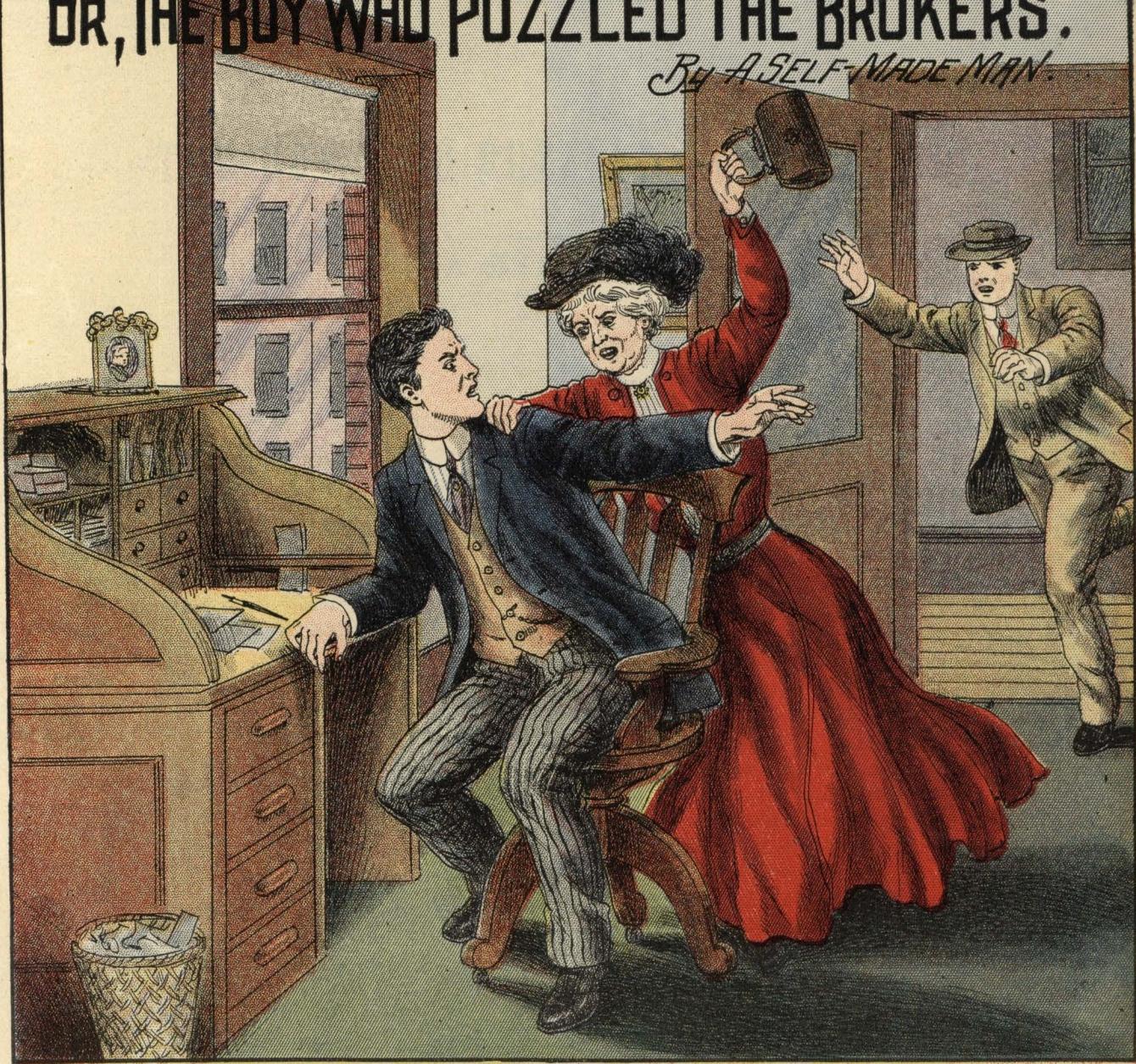
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FAME AND FORTUNE

STORIES OF BOYS **WEEKLY.** WHO MAKE MONEY.

THE YOUNG WALL STREET JONAH; OR, THE BOY WHO PUZZLED THE BROKERS.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.



The old lady seized the young broker by the shoulder with one hand and with the other she raised up her satchel. His startled cry brought Joe in on a run, shouting:
"Hey! Hey! You have got the wrong party!"

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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THE YOUNG WALL STREET JONAH

OR,

THE BOY WHO PUZZLED THE BROKERS

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

A TRANSACTION IN BONDS.

"You know Nat Nye?" said Broker Jason, meeting Broker Greene on the street one morning.

"Son of old man Nye, who represents his father in the Board-room? Of course. What about him?"

"He has ceased to represent his father at the Exchange."

"Has he? How is that?"

"The old man has started him in business for himself."

"The dickens he has! How came he to do that? Why didn't he make him his junior partner?" said Greene, apparently surprised.

"I'll never tell you why he didn't. P'haps Nat wanted to be independent of the old man; or p'haps they didn't pull well together. Whatever the reason is we are not likely to find it out."

"He seems to be a clever young fellow," said Greene. "Rather young though to branch out on his own hook."

"Yes, I don't see how he can expect to do much for some time to come."

"Oh, well, Rome wasn't built in a day. He lives at home, and besides will have his father to call upon in case he needs any assistance. I wish him luck, though he'll find that going it alone in Wall Street is not a path of roses."

The other nodded.

"I've been through the mill myself in my younger days, and I had a hard fight to secure a footing. Of course, I didn't have a wealthy father to give me a boost, and that's an advantage that will help Nye."

The conversation branched off onto a stock that was showing symptoms of rising, and then the two traders parted.

At that moment the subject of the foregoing remarks, Nat Nye, a good-looking boy of eighteen, was sitting in a revolving chair before his desk in a small newly-furnished office in a Wall Street building.

The sign on the upper glass half of the door informed the public that the tenant of the office did business in stocks and bonds on a commission basis, and that his specialty was Western mining shares.

At the time we introduce him to the reader he did not appear to be over-burdened with business, for he was leisurely paring his nails and occasionally glancing out of the window.

"So I'm a Jonah, eh?" he muttered. "That's what dad calls me, and he said he couldn't afford to have me in his office any longer. He says I queer everything I take hold of. That's a nice reputation. If it got around the Street I might just as well shut up shop, for nobody would have anything to do with me."

Nat picked up the late list of Western market quotations which had been left at the office a few minutes before and began to study it.

A few minutes later a knock sounded at the door.

"Come in," said Nat, and a sprucely-dressed stranger walked in.

"Mr. Nye in?" he said.

"That's my name. Take a seat," said Nat.

"Is that your name on the door?"

"Yes, sir."

"I understood that Broker Nye was an elderly man. Is there another trader of the name in Wall Street?"

"Yes, sir. My father. His office is at No. ____."

The visitor stroked his moustache, which was long and silky, and studied the boy trader from head to foot.

"Well," he said, "maybe you'll do as well. I have ten bonds of the D. & G. Railroad that I want to sell. Will you buy them?"

"Let me see the bonds," said Nat.

The stranger produced them.

They were \$1,000 first mortgage gold bonds, made out in the name of Bernard French, and Nat, who was something of an expert on bonds, saw that they were genuine.

"May I ask if your name is French?" he inquired.

"No; my name is Merwin White."

"Did you purchase the bonds of Mr. French?"

"I did. Here is a memorandum to that effect," and he took a paper out of his pocket and showed it to Nat.

It purported to be a sort of bill of sale from Bernard French to Merwin White, transferring the ownership of the said bonds at the market figure of 101.

It proved nothing to Nat, as he did not know either Mr. French or his handwriting, but so far as he knew it seemed to be regular.

"Have you had the bonds transferred to you on the company's books?"

"No," answered the caller.

"If you will leave the bonds and the memorandum with me I'll sell them for you, Mr. White, and charge you the usual commission."

"How long will it take you to do that?"

"I will attend to the matter right away, and you can drop in about three. I will give you a receipt for them."

That was satisfactory to the visitor, who took Nat's receipt for the bonds and then went away.

"I don't like the looks of that man," thought the boy broker. "There's something in his eye that suggests he is dangerous. He may not have come rightfully by those bonds; and furthermore I have no evidence that his name is Merwin White. He is a complete stranger to me. I'll have no trouble selling those bonds, but if it should turn out that they have been stolen there is likely to be trouble, though as these are coupon bonds I won't have to make good their value."

Nat put on his hat and went over to the Exchange to see if any missing bonds of the D. & G. road had been posted.

None had.

Then he called at his father's office, but Nye, Sr., had gone to some meeting and was not expected back till three.

He had a talk with the cashier about the bonds, and that gentleman told him to sell them on the strength of the bill of sale.

Accordingly Nat called on a brokerage firm where he was known and offered them the securities at a fraction below the market rate.

The senior partner of the firm took them and handed Nat his check.

The boy cashed the check, took the money to his office, and locked it up in his safe.

As he slammed the door to the safe, the office door

opened and a cheery-looking boy, named Joe Miller, entered.

"Hello, Nat, I see you're in business for yourself," he said. "Left your father, have you?"

"Yes, I'm a full-fledged trader myself now," smiled Nat.

"I should think you would rather have gone in with the old gentleman instead of going it alone."

"We can't always have things as we want."

"That's as much as to say that your father doesn't want a junior partner."

"He doesn't want me at any rate."

"When he made you his representative at the Exchange I thought he was training you for his partner and ultimate successor."

"I thought so too."

"Did you have a scrap with him?"

"No, I can't say that I did. We had some words over various matters and then he suggested that I gain further experience on the outside. He gave me his check for—well, a certain sum of money, and told me to hire an office and hang out my shingle. I've done so, and I hope to show him that I am able to hold my own end up."

"I guess you'll do that all right. By the way, I've quit Daly."

"No, is that so?"

"Yes. We had an argument over something that happened in the office. I didn't like the way he put it over me, so I resigned on the spot."

"Then you're out of work?"

"That's about the size of it."

"If I had anything for you to do I'd give you a job; but as I've only started in I haven't enough yet to keep myself busy."

"Haven't had a customer yet, I suppose?"

"Yes, I've had one."

"A friend of yours?"

"No, a perfect stranger. He left ten \$1,000 bonds with me for sale and I've sold them. I expect him to call at three for his money."

"Well, that's doing something."

"Yes, I'm not kicking. I bought some Idaho Copper this morning on the strength of a pointer I got from a friend of mine on the Curb. I expect to make something out of that before many days. So you see I'm not absolutely on the ragged edge."

"I should say not. You've a good home and a rich father, so it doesn't make such a lot of difference whether you do much business or not."

"I don't look at it in that light. Every broker in the Street will soon know I'm in business for myself, and I've got to make a showing for my own credit. Then I have special reasons for proving to my father that I can make a success of the business."

"You'll come out all right. I wish I was as certain of my own prospects."

"You were foolish to throw up your position before you had another in view."

"I won't say I wasn't; but for all that I won't let any man sit on my neck just because he happens to be my employer. Well, I'm going down to see Carson, a Curb broker. I heard he had a vacancy in his counting-room."

"And I'm going to lunch so I'll go out with you."

The boys left the office together.

After lunch Nat went to the Exchange gallery and stayed there till a quarter of three, when he returned to his office.

At three o'clock Merwin White, as he called himself, appeared.

"I've sold your bonds," said Nat.

"Glad to hear it," replied the visitor with a snap of his black eyes.

"I got \$1,007.50 a bond. The market value is \$1,010."

"That is satisfactory," replied Mr. White.

The whole sum amounted to \$10,075, less Nat's commission, and he turned the money over to his customer, taking a receipt for it.

After Mr. White had departed the boy entered the transaction in his books as the first piece of business he had done outside the 2,000 shares of Idaho Copper he had bought that morning for his private account, at \$9 a share.

As he put his books away a newsboy brought him the afternoon paper he had arranged to have left at the office.

The first thing his eyes rested on was the flaring headlines of the robbery some time that forenoon of the residence of Merwin White.

"Merwin White!" he exclaimed. "Why that is the name of my customer who left a little while ago with the price of his bonds in his pocket. At least he said that his name was Merwin White. Maybe—"

He read every word of the story with great interest, and before he had got half through he was satisfied that his customer was not the Merwin White who had been robbed.

A list of the stolen property was printed and among them was mentioned the ten D. & G. railroad bonds that Nat had sold for his customer.

That settled it.

He had evidently helped the thief get rid of that part of his booty.

"Great Scott!" he cried. "My first transaction, too. I guess dad must be right about me being a Jonah."

CHAPTER II.

A FAMILY SKELETON.

"Lord! If I'd only got hold of that paper fifteen minutes earlier I might have nabbed Mister Crook. As it is he's got away with something over \$10,000 in good money, and as far as I can see Mr. Merwin will be out that amount through me. That's pretty hard luck to begin business with a deal of that kind. It's going to give me a kind of black eye. Well, the only thing I can do is to notify the Police Department at once about the transaction, describe the man who represented himself as Mr. White, and let the authorities try to catch him. If they can nab him with the money in his clothes all will be well; otherwise—blessed if it isn't enough to make a chap feel like kicking himself around the block. And yet another broker might have been deceived just as I was. He looked to be a prosperous gentleman, though he did have a bad eye and an expression that ought to have put me on my guard. Gee! When I tell dad to-night about it he's sure to say I'm a Jonah from the word go. I wish I didn't have to tell him, but there's no getting out of it. The story of the robbery is in the papers, and he will have read it without

a doubt, and to-morrow there'll be an addition to it about how a young broker named Nat Nye, of No. — Wall Street, helped the thief to cash a part of his swag. Every broker will be talking about it, and what those who know me, and they are legion, won't say to me about it when they see me isn't worth mentioning."

Nat was disgusted with the outcome of the matter, and he felt that he had begun business in a rather discreditable way.

He decided that he would call on Mr. Merwin White, the man who had been robbed, that evening after dinner, and make a clean breast of the matter.

Then he put on his hat, locked up and started for home.

Nat was spared the humiliation of his father's sarcastic remarks about his first transaction as a broker, as Nye, Sr., did not come home to dinner.

He phoned Mrs. Nye that business of importance obliged him to go to Brooklyn that evening, and so he wouldn't be home till late.

"How did you get along to-day, Nat?" asked his mother at the dinner table.

"Rotten!" replied Nat, with a great deal of force to the word.

"You mean you didn't do anything?"

"Yes, I did something, and that's where the trouble comes in."

"Indeed."

"I bought \$10,000 worth of stolen bonds."

"You bought stolen bonds!" exclaimed his mother, in surprise. "Why did you do that?"

"Because it was my luck to do so, I suppose. Dad says I'm a Jonah, but I never thought so till this afternoon," replied the boy with a look of disgust on his face.

"Will you lose \$10,000?"

"I'm not legally bound to make the sum good, but I have some notion of doing so. I am going to call on the gentleman this evening who lost the bonds through a robbery that was pulled off at his house this morning, and have a talk with him. The story of the robbery is in the paper. I'll read it to you when we get through."

When the dessert was served Nat took up the paper and read the account of the burglary of Mr. Merwin White's home.

"The man who called on me with the bonds represented himself as Merwin White, and as the securities were ordinary negotiable ones I took his word for it. He had a memorandum showing that the original owner of the bonds had disposed of them to Merwin White. I have no doubt that the rascal took the memorandum when he stole the securities. Whether the person who called on me was the thief, or his confederate, I couldn't say, but he certainly had an awful nerve to come back for the money, knowing that the story was in the afternoon papers. I guess he figured that I was an easy mark. It makes me mad to think about it."

Nat's mother sympathized with him—he was her only son, and whatever he did was all right in her opinion—but that didn't afford the boy much solace.

Shortly after dinner he started for the residence of Merwin White on Fifth Avenue.

"Is Mr. White in?" he asked the servant who answered his ring.

He was told that the gentleman was at home.

"I should like to see him. Hand him my card," and Nat gave the man his business card.

He was asked in and shown into the parlor.

The servant soon came back and told Nat to follow him. He was taken to Mr. White's library, a handsomely furnished room on the second floor at the back.

That gentleman was attired in a smoking jacket and slippers, had a cigar in his mouth, and a newspaper in his hand.

He got up as Nat advanced into the room.

"To what do I owe the pleasure of this visit?" he inquired in a familiar tone.

Before half the sentence was out of his mouth Nat was staring at him in some astonishment.

He recognized the gentleman as the visitor who had called at his office that day and commissioned him to sell the D. & G. bonds.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I guess the errand I called upon was unnecessary," he said, feeling greatly relieved to find that the man who had represented himself as Merwin White really was that person.

"Unnecessary!" said the gentleman, pleasantly.

"Yes, sir; for I recognize you as the gentleman who called at my office to-day and got me to sell the ten D. & G. bonds, and I dare say you recognize me as the young broker who figured in the matter."

"I called at your office to-day!" ejaculated Mr. White, with a puzzled look.

"You will pardon me for suspecting that I had been imposed upon," said Nat, not noticing the gentleman's remark, "for fifteen minutes after you went away with the money I saw an account in the paper of a robbery that had been committed at the residence of a Mr. Merwin White, and in the list of stolen articles were mentioned the very bonds I had sold for you. While I did not consider I was legally responsible for the value of the bonds, since they are negotiable, still I felt that an explanation was due you, and if you insisted that I ought to make good I intended to stand the loss, hence this visit."

"Sit down, young man," said Mr. White, "and let us talk this matter over. You say I called at your office to-day and had you sell for me certain D. & G. bonds?"

"Yes, sir. I guess there is no doubt about it," smiled Nat.

The gentleman picked up the boy broker's card and looked at it.

"You are Nat Nye?" he said.

"Yes, sir."

"Any connection of William Nye, broker, No. — Wall Street?"

"He is my father. I mentioned the fact to you at the office."

The gentleman smiled in a peculiar manner, and it now struck Nat that the expression of his face was different from what he had noticed at the office.

His jet black eyes did not have that wicked look in them he had particularly observed before.

"So you are sure I called at your office yesterday and employed you to sell some D. & G. bonds that you subsequently saw advertised among a list of property stolen from my

house earlier in the day?" said Mr. White, with a quizzical smile.

"Why, of course I'm sure," replied Nat, surprised at the question. "You are the dead picture of my visitor; besides, he said his name was Merwin White, and that's your name. The bonds were purchased by you from a man named Bernard French, and here is the memorandum of the sale which you left me."

"Well, my young friend, as those bonds were taken from this house by a thief before nine o'clock yesterday morning, and the thief has not yet been caught by the police, nor my property recovered, will you tell me how I could have brought those securities to your office yesterday afternoon?" asked Mr. White.

"I'm not good at guessing conundrums, sir, but you did it just the same," replied Nat.

"If you were called upon in court to swear to the fact could you do it?"

"I could. I can't imagine any reason for you denying the visit."

"The only reason I have is that I wasn't at your office yesterday. Until you stepped into this room I never had the pleasure of seeing you before."

Nat gasped.

"At what hour do you say I was in your office?"

"You called first at half-past twelve and left the bonds. Then you returned at three for the money," answered Nat.

"I think I can easily establish an alibi. At half-past twelve I was attending a stockholders' meeting of the Durham Silverware Company in a building on Fifth Avenue, near Madison Square. I am vice-president of the company. I could not very well be in two places at one time. You'll admit that."

"Well, if you weren't at my office yesterday afternoon I'd give a whole lot to know who the man is who called and looked so like you that I can't tell you apart."

"I think I can explain the mystery."

"I wish you would, then."

"The person who called on you and represented himself as me must have been my twin brother Alfred White."

"Oh!" exclaimed Nat. "You have a twin brother?"

"I have, and I'm sorry to say he is not just what I would wish him to be."

"Do you suspect that he committed the robbery in your house?"

"I know that he didn't; but your statement convinces me that he had a hand in it indirectly."

"I notified Police Headquarters immediately after I read the story in the papers, and furnished the officer at the other end of the wire with a good description of the man who got me to put through the bond transaction. As you answer that description as well as your brother, the detectives are going to have some trouble in arresting the right party. You are liable to be pulled in in his place."

"I'm rather sorry that you gave Alfred's description to the authorities, but of course, I don't blame you for doing so. Under the circumstances your promptness is to be commended."

"Well, it seems evident that your brother had no right to offer the bonds for sale, and that I innocently helped him to secure their money value," said Nat.

"It would appear so from your statement," nodded Mr. White.

"Do you consider me responsible for the amount involved?"

"Hardly. The loss will have to fall on me unless I can find my brother and make him disgorge, which is more than doubtful. I am much obliged to you for calling on me and telling me what you have, for I really had no suspicion that my brother was in any way connected with the burglary in this house. I fear he has taken up with even worse company than I know he has been going with. The job, in the opinion of the two detectives who were here looking into it, is the work of an expert professional. It seems quite clear from your story that my brother was hand-in-glove with him in the work. That is, he put the crook up to it. Furnished him with inside information, and then helped dispose of the plunder. It is a very sad piece of business for me. Not so much as regards the pecuniary loss involved, as the fact that my own flesh and blood has got so low as to associate with the criminal class."

Mr. White spoke with considerable feeling and Nat felt sorry for him.

"Now, Mr. Nye, I hope you will keep this matter to yourself. It is a family skeleton that I would not have revealed for worlds."

"I promise you I will not say a word about what you have told me."

"Thank you. I shall consider that you have placed me under a great obligation, and I will not forget it."

"If you want to recover the bonds I can tell you the brokerage house to whom I sold them."

"What did you sell them for?"

"I sold them for \$10,075—a quarter of one per cent. below the market price."

"Then as you are a broker I commission you to recover them for me. I will give you my check for \$10,100, the present market price, I believe, and when you deliver the bonds you can send your statement with your commission," said Mr. White.

"Commission!" exclaimed Nat. "Do you suppose I would charge you a commission for recovering those bonds? I should say not. I can't help feeling that I am in a manner responsible for the loss you are put to in connection with their sale."

"Forget about it, young man. The next time a stranger brings you bonds for sale you will probably be more cautious in dealing with him."

"I warrant you I will," replied Nat, with some energy.

"You are rather young to be a broker, it seems to me. How is it you are not in with your father? Does he approve of you going it alone?"

"He certainly approves of it for it was at his suggestion I started out for myself. He wants to see what I can do on my own hook."

"I see. Thinks you will gain more experience that way. Wants you to learn to rely on yourself? Capital idea! How long have you been in business?"

"Just started. Yesterday was my first day, and I can't say I am very proud of what happened."

"You refer to the bonds? Well, don't let that worry you. Brokers are no more infallible than other people."

"That's true; but think of the thing happening on my first day?"

"Oh, well, a similar thing might not happen again in ten years."

"I should hope it wouldn't."

"I'll keep your card and when I'm in Wall Street I'll call on you."

"I should be glad to see you."

"I do quite some business down there. It is possible I may put something in your way."

"I should be very much obliged to you if you would. Well, I won't take any more of your time," said Nat, arising. "I thank you for allowing me the pleasure of recovering the bonds for you."

"Don't mention it. I am glad to have you do it for me," said Mr. White, pushing a button in the wall.

The servant who admitted Nat appeared and Mr. White told him to show the boy out.

As Nat shook hands with the gentleman his eyes accidentally rested on the window.

He saw, pressed against the glass of the upper sash, which was lowered about a foot from the top, a face the exact counterpart of Mr. White's.

He uttered an exclamation.

"Look! Look!" he cried, pointing. "Your brother is at the window."

Mr. White sprang around, but the face had vanished. The gentleman rushed to the window and threw it open.

There was no one in sight; but as the neighboring fence was only a yard away, it was possible for Alfred White, if he had really been spying in at the window of the library, to have made a rapid retreat into the next yard and thus got out of sight.

"You are sure you saw my brother at the window?" said Mr. White.

"Yes. I saw the exact duplicate of your face pressed against the glass," replied Nat.

The gentleman sighed and closed the sash down.

Five minutes later Nat was on the sidewalk walking homeward.

CHAPTER III.

FOOLED AGAIN.

"Well, if I am a Jonah this bond business hasn't turned out so bad after all," thought Nat, as he walked along. "I am relieved of the necessity of making the value of the securities good, and Mr. White shows his confidence in me by giving me his check for \$10,100 to get them back. No one need know that I actually paid the money to the accomplice of the thief, and so I will save my reputation. Gracious! How much alike those two brothers do look! The only difference is the expression of their faces and the look of their eyes. Alfred White is evidently the black sheep of the family. It is rather a low trick to help a professional crook to rob your own brother; but tougher things than that are happening every day in a big city like this. I'm afraid Alfred White will see his finish if he doesn't give up his crooked associates."

When he reached home he told his mother that he had fixed up the bond matter with the owner of the securities, and would not have to make good their price.

He said nothing about the White family skeleton, consequently his mother remained in ignorance of the true facts of the case.

He told her not to say anything to his father about the matter, as things had been so arranged that his slip-up was not likely to become known to his disadvantage.

Next morning at breakfast he told his father about the incident in a general way, leaving him to believe that he had not actually fallen into the trap Alfred White set for him.

Of course he was careful not to intimate in any way that his office visitor and the gentleman who had been robbed were brothers, so Nye, Sr., believed that it was the crook who had committed the robbery who tried to take advantage of his son.

Nat had sold the bonds to Howard Waters & Co., and as soon as he got down town he called on Mr. Waters and told him that he wanted the securities back.

Having cashed Mr. White's check he had the money in his pocket to pay for them at the market price of 101.

Mr. Waters knew now that the bonds had been stolen from their rightful owner, and expecting to have trouble about them intended to communicate with the young broker and learn the exact particulars of the case.

Nat's offer to buy them back simplified matters, and the broker was only too glad to accommodate him.

When the young broker told him that he wouldn't lose anything through the transaction, Mr. Waters supposed that the boy had not paid the money over to the man who brought the securities to him to be disposed of, and congratulated him over the fact.

Nat was glad that he took that view of the matter for it saved his credit, and returned to the office with the bonds.

He found a detective from Police Headquarters waiting to interview him.

This was the outcome of his telephone message to the Department.

He had reported that his customer had got away with the value of the bonds and he found it a difficult matter to convince the sleuth that he had been too hasty in sending such a message.

"I've got the bonds in my possession," he said, "and have seen Mr. Merwin White about them. I shall deliver them to him to-night."

The detective wanted to see the securities and Nat exhibited them.

After satisfying himself that they were the stolen bonds he said he'd take them with him and turn them over to the Department.

Nat declined to let him have them on the ground that he was bound to hand them over to the owner according to an agreement he had made to do so.

The detective then asked him for a full description of the man who had brought the bonds to him.

Nat gave it to him, but knowing that Mr. White did not want his brother arrested in connection with the robbery he purposely refrained from making an accurate outline of Alfred White.

The sleuth, however, had a copy of what Nye had telephoned over the wire about the man, and comparing the two descriptions called the boy's attention to certain discrepancies in them.

Nat squeezed out of the matter the best way he could, without exciting the officer's suspicions, and the detective finally departed.

The young broker ran the gauntlet of many traders he knew well that day, every one of whom had learned through Broker Waters, or his partner, of Nat's experience with the stolen bonds, and they congratulated him on his escape from trouble.

About three o'clock, as he was reading an afternoon Wall Street daily, his door opened and to his surprise Mr. Merwin White walked in.

At least he believed it was Merwin White, for it didn't seem probable that Alfred White would visit him again after getting away with the value of the bonds.

"Well, young man, I've dropped in as I said I would when I was down this way," said his caller, and those words relieved him of any doubts he had as to the real identity of the man.

"I'm glad to see you, Mr. White," said Nat, effusively. "Take a seat."

"You've a fine little office here," said the gentleman, looking around.

"Yes, it's all right for a start," replied Nat.

"This is your second day in business, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"Could you recommend me any good stock that I could take a flyer in?"

"Well, there are several that look pretty good for a rise. A. & M. for one. It is down to bed rock and I've heard two or three brokers say it is due to go up."

"You make a specialty in mining shares, I see?"

"I do. I had entire charge of that branch of my father's business, and I may say I am pretty well acquainted with the standing and values of Western mines."

"Can you recommend anything in that line?"

"Yes; Idaho Copper is a promising stock to take hold of now. I've got 2,000 shares myself. It is going now at \$9.25 a share, and will be higher."

"I will consider it, and perhaps I will give you an order to buy me some of it. I am more interested in mining than railroad shares."

"The sooner you buy Idaho Copper the better, as it will surely advance right along. It is liable to be up to \$10 to-morrow."

"If I decide to buy some I'll be down to-morrow, or send you the order by mail, accompanied by my check," said Mr. White. "By the way, did you get back my bonds?"

"I did. I've got them in the safe now. Will you take them with you?"

"I might as well, and I thank you for recovering them."

"That's all right, Mr. White. Happy to be of service to you."

Nat got the envelope containing the securities from his safe and handed them to his visitor.

A look of satisfaction flashed from Mr. White's eyes as he took the package.

Nat saw it, and then for the first time he noticed the same wicked look he had seen in Alfred White's eyes.

"He's got the same expression that his brother has, after all," thought Nat.

That practically completed the likeness of the two brothers and made their identification all the more difficult.

THE YOUNG WALL STREET JONAH.

There was some difference in their attire, however.

Alfred wore a smart business suit and a derby, while his present visitor was attired in a Prince Albert coat, and had a silk hat.

He had noticed the day before that Alfred sported a ruby ring in a heavy gold setting on the little finger of his right hand.

A similar ring, so exactly like the other that there appeared to be no difference between them, was on his caller's little finger.

Nat wondered why the brothers did not wear the rings on different hands as that would serve as a kind of identification.

While he was considering the matter, Mr. White got up and said he must get up town to keep an important engagement.

Nat wished him good afternoon, and said he hoped he would call again soon.

His visitor promised to do so and departed.

Hardly had he gone when Joe Miller walked in.

"Hello, Joe," said Nat.

"Hello, Nat. I dropped in to tell you that I've caught on at Carson's."

"Glad to hear it, old man."

"I'm going to work on Monday. I'm going to get \$2 more a week, too, so you see I haven't lost anything by cutting loose from Daly."

"You're lucky."

"Say, who was that man who just left your office?"

"Mr. Merwin White. That's the gentleman whose Fifth Avenue house was looted of a number of valuables, including some D. & G. bonds, yesterday morning. You must have read about it in the paper yesterday afternoon. The story was in the morning papers, too, with a statement that I had sold the stolen bonds for the thief or his accomplice."

"You!" exclaimed Joe, in surprise.

"Yes; but what the papers say isn't always so, you know."

"Then how came the report to be printed?"

"Because the bonds were brought to me to be sold, and I notified the police of the fact."

"Oh, I see. Seems funny that the man who had the bonds should have brought them to you, a brand new broker."

"I think he intended to go to my father's office, and getting into this building by mistake and seeing the name 'Nye' on the door, concluded he had struck the right office."

"I wouldn't be surprised. Persons looking for your father, and not having his number, are not unlikely to drop in on you. The reason I spoke about this visitor of yours is that I saw him down on Broad Street on my way here, and I'm rather mystified to make out how he got here ahead of me."

"You saw him on Broad Street! When?"

"About fifteen minutes ago."

"You didn't see him, for he was in here talking to me fifteen minutes ago."

"I'll swear I saw a man who looked as like him as one pea is to another," asserted Joe.

"Then you must have seen his brother—they are twins."

"Twins! I should say they were twins. They're the dead picture of each other."

"That was Alfred White you saw. He's got a great nerve to venture down in Wall Street after what happened yesterday—"

Nat stopped abruptly as he became conscious that he was saying too much.

"What are you talking about? What happened yesterday?"

"I can't tell you. It's a private matter. The two brothers are wonderfully alike."

"They certainly are," said Joe. "It's a wonder they wouldn't dress differently so their friends can tell them apart."

"They do. The one you saw had a business suit and a derby hat on."

"No, he didn't. He had a Prince Albert and a silk dicer, just like the man who left your office when I came along the corridor."

"He did!" exclaimed Nat, in surprise. "Why, yesterday he—"

He stopped again and looked at Joe.

"Well, why don't you go on?" asked Miller. "What were you going to say?"

"Nothing much. Merely that when I saw Alfred White yesterday he was dressed as I stated—in a business suit and a derby."

"He didn't have the same clothes on to-day, then, if that was Alfred as you say. You seem to know them pretty well."

"Yes, I know them," replied Nat, evasively.

"Are they brokers?"

"No. Merwin White is a capitalist, I believe. I couldn't say what business, if any, his brother follows."

At that juncture there came a knock at the door.

"Come in," said Nat.

To his great surprise in walked his late visitor again.

Joe glanced at him as Nat jumped up.

Before the young broker could open his mouth the caller said, extending his hand:

"Well, young man, I dropped in as I said I would when I came down town."

Nat looked at him in surprise.

Those were the very words he had uttered when he made his appearance before.

What did this repetition of his original greeting mean?

All Nat could say was:

"I'm glad to see you back, sir. Take a seat."

"I guess I'll get on," said Joe, feeling that he was in the way. "I'll see you to-morrow perhaps."

"All right," replied Nat, and Joe departed.

"You've a nice office here, Mr. Nye," said Mr. White, "but may I ask what you meant by saying that you're glad to see me back?"

"Why, because you were here only about fifteen minutes ago."

"I was?" smiled the visitor. "Not to my knowledge I wasn't."

"What!" gasped the astonished boy broker. "You weren't here a little while ago?"

"No. I was down on Broad Street at that time."

"Good lord! Then you are Mr. Alfred White."

"No. I'm Merwin White, the gentleman you called on last evening at his home."

"Impossible! Mr. Merwin White left here a quarter of an hour ago, and I thought you were he. You are both dressed alike to-day so I can't tell you apart. Yesterday you wore a business suit and a derby, now——"

"Excuse me, young man, but I never wear a business suit and a derby. That is the way my brother Albert dresses. I always wear a silk hat and a Prince Albert to distinguish myself from him."

Nat was paralyzed at his words.

"Do you mean to say you are not Alfred White?"

"Certainly I am not," replied the visitor, evidently surprised.

"I wish you could prove it for very important reasons."

"What are the reasons?"

"On account of those bonds which you, if you are Merwin White, commissioned me last night to recover, and handed me your check to pay for them."

"What have the bonds to do with my identity?"

"A great deal, because I——"

He stopped and stared at the little finger of his visitor's right hand.

The ruby ring which had caught his eye before was missing.

"What are you looking at?"

"I'm looking for the ruby ring that was on your finger, or on your——"

"My brother wears a valuable ruby ring on his little finger."

"Then it must have been your brother who was in here a while ago."

"It certainly wasn't I."

"And you are really Merwin White and not Alfred?"

The gentleman pulled a bankbook and some letters out of his pocket.

"I am, and there are proofs of the fact," he said.

"My gracious!" cried Nat, dropping into his chair, "of all the Jonahs that ever existed I am the top-notcher. Your brother has got hold of those bonds again, and I gave them to him thinking he was you."

CHAPTER IV.

THE MENDED NOTE.

"Do you mean to say that my brother called on you again, and that mistaking him for me you gave him those bonds that you recovered at my orders?" asked the gentleman.

"I do mean it."

"Upon my word this is a most remarkable state of affairs."

"I was completely deceived, for to begin with he was dressed differently to what he was yesterday. He looked exactly like you do now, with a silk hat and a frock coat. The only difference is that he wore a ruby ring on the little finger of his right hand and you do not. Then he addressed me just as I would expect you to do, and referred to the promise you made me last evening to call and see me when you came down town. In fact the exact words you did on entering. And then, after some conversation, he asked me in an off-hand way if I had recovered the bonds, and how

did he come to know that you had promised to call on me when you came to Wall Street?"

"How? By overhearing our conversation in the library. Don't you remember that you called my attention to the fact that you saw his face at the window?"

"By George! You're right. He determined to get those bonds away from me by passing himself off again as you; and to disarm any suspicion I might entertain he dressed himself just as you do. The only mistake he made was to wear the ruby ring. Had I been aware that you did not own a similar ring that error would have queered him; but I didn't know, and so he got away with the goods."

"My brother is evidently a very slick card," said Merwin White. "He is learning new tricks every day. He was born with a vicious streak, and therein lies our family trouble. He has done enough against me to put him behind prison bars, but he knows I will not prosecute him, and takes every advantage of the fact. What I fear is that he will get caught at some crooked work by others, who will not be as lenient with him as I. Exposure and disgrace would follow, and it would almost break my heart to see him sent to prison, for unscrupulous as he is, still he is my twin brother, and I would do anything in the world to save him from the consequences of his follies."

Nat regarded his visitor with a sympathetic eye.

He also thought he deserved a certain amount of sympathy himself for being twice imposed upon by Mr. White's rascally brother.

What interested him most at that moment was how to guard against a possible third attempt at the same game.

"Your brother may take it into his head to work me again, Mr. White," he said. "He certainly has no lack of nerve, and probably he has sized me up as an easy mark. Can you give me some infallible sign that will identify him under any circumstances?"

"The ruby ring is one."

"I know; but he can easily take it off."

"The expression of his face and the look of his eyes is different—but not always I'll admit."

"I have noticed both, and still was taken in to-day."

"I can give you one positive means of identification, but you must promise me on your word of honor that you will not use it to get him in trouble."

"I promise."

"I will trust you, Nye, for I believe you are a boy of honor. Look well at my thumbs."

"I am looking, sir."

"They are perfect, are they not?"

"They are."

"My brother bears a slight red scar on the thumb of his right hand here. He got cut when a boy, and the mark will remain as long as he lives. When you see that scar on the thumb of one of us you will know you are in the presence of my brother Alfred. It is the best test I can offer you."

"Thank you, sir. I think it will answer the purpose."

"So he got possession of those bonds of mine again?"

"I am sorry to say that he did."

"I will take the best means possible to prevent him from disposing of them a second time. I will see that every Exchange is notified, and that will bring them to the attention of the brokers in different parts of the country. I will also write to the secretary of the railroad company

in Chicago, informing him of my loss. I think my brother, or any one else, will find some difficulty in selling the bonds."

"I regret that I am the cause of giving you so much trouble," said Nat.

"Don't worry about it. The circumstances excuse you."

During the conversation that succeeded, Nat called Mr. White's attention to Idaho Copper, and suggested that he couldn't do better than buy some of it.

The gentleman thought his suggestion good and gave Nat an order to get him 3,000 shares at the market price which was 9½.

He wrote his check for the sum necessary to cover the transaction and then took his leave.

As it was nearly half-past four, Nat locked up and went home.

Next morning he bought the Idaho Copper shares for Mr. White, and an hour after he got them the price was up to 9½.

Soon after he came back from lunch Broker Greene walked into his office.

"How are you, Nye?" he said, cheerfully. "So this is your den?"

"Yes, this is where I hang out. Take a seat and make yourself at home."

"How came you to start out on your own hook?"

"To extend my sphere of usefulness."

"Couldn't you extend it in your father's office?"

"Not very well."

"Is this your first week here?"

"It is."

"Doing anything?"

"A little."

"I suppose you've got time to execute a small commission from me."

"Yes, sir; I'm entirely at your service."

"I want you to call on a little old man in the Bronx, named Brett, and try to buy 1,000 shares of Westchester Traction stock that he owns. It is worth 39 to-day, but you can offer him as high as 42 if he refuses to take any less. Should he turn that figure down, go to the nearest drug store that has a pay telephone and call up 900 X, Manhattan. I will come to the phone and talk with you. Here is Brett's address. He will doubtless ask you who you are buying the stock for. Tell him for a customer of yours. If he asks you how you found out he had the stock, you must say that you found out through the secretary of the company."

"All right. Shall I find him at home now?"

"You might, but you needn't go up to his place until three. If you go sooner you would be unable to catch me at the telephone number I've given you."

"Very well, I'll start a little after three if nothing prevents."

Mr. Greene nodded.

"How is payment to be made to this man Brett in case he's willing to sell at 42 or lower?"

"I will send you a certified check for \$40,000, made out to your order, and \$2,000 cash. The check will not be signed by me but by a friend of mine. Under no circumstances must you let on that I am interested in getting

the shares. You will go ahead just as if you had received this order from a customer of yours."

"I understand. Your name shall not figure in the matter at all," replied Nat.

"In case you make the deal you will deliver the stock to me in the morning with your statement, charging the usual commission," said Broker Greene, rising and then taking his leave.

Shortly afterward Nat went down to the Curb market and hung around there till it closed at three.

Idaho Copper was the chief attraction, and it advanced to 10½.

At three a messenger brought him an envelope containing a certified check for \$40,000, and two \$1,000 bank notes.

At twenty minutes after three Nat closed up his office, walked down to Hanover Square and took a Third Avenue elevated train for the Bronx station nearest to his destination.

He had quite a walk before him when he left the cars, and it was after five when he rang the bell at the gate in a stone wall surrounding the house where Mr. Brett lived, in an ancient mansion built during the time of the Revolution.

In the course of five minutes a sliding wicket opened in the gate and the face of an old woman appeared at it.

"What do you want?" she asked in a tone by no means amiable.

"Is Mr. Abel Brett at home?" Nat inquired.

"Yes."

"I'd like to see him."

"What's your business with him?"

"Hand him my card, please," said the boy broker, shoving his pasteboard in at the wicket.

The woman took it, shut the slide and went away.

Nat stood there nearly ten minutes before she came back.

Then she opened the gate and admitted him.

"Follow me," she said, starting for the house which stood back in the midst of its grounds.

The place would have been attractive had it been well cared for, but it wasn't.

The front door stood ajar and Nat followed his guide into the house.

He found himself in a wide hallway with a low ceiling, and furnished with a couple of stiff settees on either side.

At the back of the hall was a staircase, very wide, with a landing at about every six steps where it made a turn.

The woman marched up the stairs and Nat kept close behind her.

She introduced him into a large room on the second floor at the back of the house.

The furniture and decorations were old-fashioned and dull with age.

Before an open fireplace sat a little old man in a dressing gown, toasting his toes in the heat of the blaze.

"Are you Mr. Brett?" asked the young broker.

"Yes," was the reply, as the speaker eyed his visitor sharply.

"A customer of mine is looking for 1,000 shares of Westchester Traction stock. Learning through the secretary of the company that you have that amount of it, I took the liberty of calling on you to see if you would sell

your stock. My customer will pay a point above the market price, which at present is 39."

"Oh, he will," grinned the old man. "What's his name?"

"I'm not at liberty to mention his name."

"Well, you can't do any business with me, leastways under 42, and I ain't sure I'll sell at that."

"The stock isn't worth 42," said Nat.

"It's worth that to me."

"Wouldn't you take 41?"

"No, I wouldn't."

Nat saw he had a hard proposition to handle, and rather doubted the success of his mission.

He offered 41½, but the old man wouldn't listen to it.

Finally he agreed to pay 42 for the shares.

"I thought you'd come to it," chuckled Brett; "but since you've raised your figures I'll raise mine. You can have the stock at 43."

"No," replied Nat. "I am not authorized to go a cent above 42."

"Well, then, it's no sale."

"All right," said the young broker. "I'm sorry we can't come to terms; but 42 is absolutely my limit."

"P'haps you'll give 42½," said Brett, eying the boy a moment or two.

"If I were buying it for myself, and wanted it bad enough I might close with you; but as I'm acting for another, under his instructions, I cannot offer you more than he's willing to give."

"Did you bring the money to pay for the stock?"

"I brought a check."

"I wouldn't take a check."

"It's certified by the paying teller of the Manhattan National Bank, that makes it as good as cash, for the bank guarantees payment."

"That's different. Let me see the check."

Nat showed it to him.

The old man first scanned the signature and then remarked:

"This is only good for \$40,000," he said.

"I know it. I have \$2,000 in cash in my pocket to add to it."

"Well, you can have the shares, though I think I'm a fool for selling at less than 43."

"How can you be? You are getting \$3,000 more than the market price."

"I know it; but the price might rise higher than 42 in a day or two."

"It might and again it might not. It's all a lottery, the market is. The stock closed to-day at 39. Well, if you want to make \$3,000 easy and still have 1,000 shares of Westchester Traction, all you need do is to hand me your shares and take this check and the \$2,000 cash. Then in the morning go straight to Wall Street and buy 1,000 shares of Westchester Traction at 39; if you can get it."

"That's so. I didn't think of that. It's a good idea, but I don't want any more stock. I want the money. I'll get you the certificate, and that will let me out of the stock business for good."

The old man got up and walked slowly out of the room into an adjacent one.

Presently he returned with a certificate of stock in his hands.

Nat handed him the check and the \$2,000 in money.

The old man turned the two \$1,000 bills over in his fingers, looking at them carefully.

"Here, what's this?" he exclaimed. "This one has been torn in two and stuck together with red paper."

"That doesn't hurt it any," replied Nat, observing the way the note had been repaired. "It's good, and will pass as easily as a new one."

"Maybe so—maybe so," said the old man; "but I don't like it. That mark looks like blood, and I hate blood. It's shaped like a coffin, too. Ugh!"

"You'll have to accept it, as I haven't another to exchange for it. You can put it in your bank to-morrow. The bank will take it and probably send it to Washington to be redeemed for a new one," said Nat, who thought nothing of the coffin-shaped strip of deep red paper that held the two pieces of the note together.

The old man kept looking at it as if he didn't like it and didn't want to take it as part payment for the certificate.

"I'll take it if you promise to bring me a brand new one to-morrow, and take this one away," he said reluctantly. "I don't want a bill like that in the house."

"I will if you insist, but what's the use? You'll have to deposit that check for collection in your bank, and you can deposit both notes with it. Why should you keep them about the house? They're too large to be readily changed, and a thief might get in here and rob you of them. It's foolish to take any chances when there is no need of it."

"I will do as you say," replied Mr. Brett. "I will put the check and the two notes in my safe till the morning and then I'll deposit them in the bank where I have a small account, but I don't like banks. They fail and then you lose most of your money. Will you write down the numbers of these notes for me?"

"Certainly," replied Nat, proceeding to do so.

"Now write down the number of the torn note again and take it with you. If the bank should refuse it I will call on you for another."

Nat wrote the number in his memorandum book.

"Now notice how it is repaired so there will be no mistake about it if I have to return it to you. See, there is a stencil mark across the red paper. What does it say?"

"Washington Trust Co.," replied Nat, looking at the stencil closely. "The same stencil is on the other bill, too. That proves how good both are."

The young broker took his receipt for the money, put the certificate in his pocket, wished the old man good evening, for it was now dark, and was shown out of the gate by the sour-looking old woman.

CHAPTER V.

WAS NAT THE OLD MAN'S JONAH?

"Thank goodness the Jonah hoodoo hasn't worked in this case, or I'd have made a failure of my mission, then I'd have lost \$125 commission," thought Nat, as he walked toward the station. "I've been a Jonah to Mr. Merwin White, however. If he suspected that I am handicapped by an unlucky streak he wouldn't have anything more to do with me. He's bound to make money out of Idaho Copper,

though, or all signs go for nothing. I'd rather see him make it than make it myself as things have turned out, for he's a nice man, the very opposite of his rascally twin brother. I'm glad I know how to identify Mr. Alfred now. He won't be able to work any more crooked games on me after this. He'll see his finish some day in spite of his brother's regard for him. If he's in with a crook, as seems evident, it will only be a question of time when he'll be caught and sent up the river."

Dinner was nearly over when Nat reached home, but he got some, explaining to his father and mother the business which had detained him.

"I suppose you don't know who Greene is buying Westchester Traction for?" asked his father.

"No, sir."

"It must be pretty scarce when the purchaser was willing to pay three points above the market for it. There's something in the wind."

"I wouldn't be surprised."

"I remember now I saw in the paper some time ago a paragraph which stated that a number of big stockholders were dissatisfied with the management of the road. They may have met together, formed a coalition to try and secure a majority of the shares for the purpose of ousting those at present on the inside at the annual meeting which comes off next month," said Nye, Sr.

"I dare say you're right, sir. The opposition faction of a railroad is always ready to pay a good price for stock to complete the amount they want."

That closed the discussion, and Mr. Nye soon after went to his club.

Next morning when Nat came down to breakfast he picked up the morning paper to look over the general news.

On the first page, under a big scare heading, was the account of a murder committed the previous night in the Bronx.

Nat didn't take much interest in murders.

They were pretty frequent, in one form or another, in New York and vicinity.

He merely intended to glance over the heading and get a general idea of the crime without going into the particulars.

He had read but a few words before he came to the name of the victim.

He gave a gasp, for it was Abel Brett, the old man he had called on the previous afternoon, and purchased the certificate of Westchester Traction stock from.

"Good gracious!" he exclaimed. "What was that poor old fellow killed for?"

According to the facts obtained by the reporters Abel Brett lived in the old Waite Revolutionary mansion with his housekeeper, Mrs. Bunn, a woman of sixty, as his only companion.

About midnight the old woman was awakened by a noise at the window of her room.

Sitting up in her bed she saw that the lower sash had been raised and a big masked man was in the act of stepping into her chamber, while a second man, also masked, was behind him awaiting his turn.

She tried to scream, but terror deprived her of the power to do so.

The big man flashed a dark lantern on her, and seeing

that she was awake he drew a revolver and advancing to the bed threatened to shoot her if she made a sound.

She said the moon was shining brightly at the time and she saw the figures of both men plainly.

As the second man got in his mask fell off and she saw his face, which she declared she would know again under any circumstances.

The men bound and gagged her, and then left her half dead with fright.

In a short time she heard a cry from Mr. Brett's room, and this was followed by the muffled report of a revolver.

She heard nothing more for some time, and then the sound that reached her was the banging of the front door.

Believing the men had gone away she struggled to release herself and fortunately succeeded.

The first thing she did was to rush to Mr. Brett's room. He was not there.

Then she went into the adjoining apartment where his desk and safe were.

There she found her master stone dead on the floor with a bullet wound in his heart.

The safe, which was merely a strong box without a combination lock, was open and a bunch of keys belonging to the old man hanging in the lock.

It had been rifled of everything valuable.

She immediately rushed to the telephone in the room and notified the police.

When subsequently questioned by a detective she could throw no light on what the safe had contained, as her master had never confided his private affairs to her.

She did not believe he had much money in the house, as more than once he had given her to understand that he was short of funds.

She believed, however, that he had bonds and other securities from which he realized a moderate income.

If this part of her statement was true the burglars and murderers had carried them off, for nothing of value was found in the safe.

She was able to furnish the police with a pretty accurate description of the rascals which was not given out for publication and the detectives believed they would be able to round the men up before long.

That was the story and Nat was greatly interested in it.

"I guess I can give the police a pointer that ought to be of great advantage to them. I can tell them that the old man had at least two \$1,000 bank notes in his safe, one of which, the repaired one, I can fully describe, even down to its number, which the old man's forethought supplied me with. He also had a certified check for \$40,000. This will be of no use whatever to the rascals, as I will see that its payment is immediately stopped. The scoundrels will lose no time in trying to change the big notes, so some action ought to be taken at once to head them off. I will drop in at Police Headquarters on my way down town and tell what I know," and Nat began to eat his breakfast hurriedly.

When his father and mother came to the table Nat handed the former the newspaper with the remark:

"Another murder, this time in the Bronx, dad."

"Indeed," replied Nye, Sr. "They are altogether too frequent considering we are supposed to have the finest police force in the world."

"You'll be astonished to hear that the old man who was murdered is the very one I called on yesterday afternoon and bought the 1,000 share Westchester Traction certificate from."

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed his father, amazed.

"It's a fact, sir. You remember I said his name was Brett, and that he lived in one of the oldest residences in the Bronx."

"Yes."

"And that he had a sour-looking old woman for a house-keeper."

The broker nodded.

"You'll find it all described in the paper. Well, I'm going to the police right away," and Nat explained the nature of his errand.

"Your information ought to be of great value toward the apprehension of the villains," said his father.

"I hope so. That repaired note should lead to their capture."

"It can readily be identified from the complete description you are able to give of it."

"Pretty hard luck for an old man to be killed just as he came into cash enough to make him independent for the rest of his life."

"I'm afraid you proved a Jonah to him," chuckled his father.

"Good Lord! Don't say that, dad. I'm unlucky enough as it is," said Nat, rising from the table and preparing to go downtown.

Within thirty minutes he was at Police Headquarters, telling his story about the business he had transacted with the murdered man, and explaining the peculiarity of the marked \$1,000 bank note.

The information he imparted was considered very important, and likely to prove the means of running down the villains.

From Police Headquarters Nat went straight to the Manhattan National Bank and had an interview with the cashier.

The result of it was that payment of the certified check was stopped, the bank holding the money in the interest of Brett's estate.

Nat then proceeded to Broker Greene's office to deliver to him the 1,000-share certificate of Westchester Traction stock he had purchased from Brett.

He was shown into the trader's private room.

Not having received a message from Nat over the 'phone, Mr. Greene calculated that the boy broker had secured the shares.

He was much astonished to read in the morning paper about the old man's tragic end, and awaited Nat's visit with some impatience.

"Well, Nat, what luck?" he asked the boy.

"I've got the stock, sir, but I had to pay 42 for it. In fact, Brett wanted 43."

"That's all right; but isn't it singular that the old man was killed a few hours after you put the deal through?"

"Yes, it is."

"It would seem as if the burglars were aware that he had received a large sum of money at an hour that precluded him from depositing it in the bank."

"The certified check won't do them any good for I

stopped at the bank before I came here and had payment held up."

"I know you did, for I 'phoned the bank on the subject myself, and was told that you had just been there on the same errand. The rascals got the \$2,000 in cash, however."

"Yes; but as one of those notes was mended in a peculiar manner, and I have furnished the police with a full description of it, even to its number, it may lead to their detection."

"I hope it will, for their crime was a most outrageous one. Did you bring your statement with you?"

"No, I'll send it to you some time to-day."

"Do so."

As there were a number of persons in the ante-room waiting to see Mr. Greene, Nat left as soon as he had passed the certificate of Westchester Traction to the broker.

Nat spent his time that day between his office and the Curb market.

Idaho Copper continued to be the chief attraction, and it made steady advances, finally closing at 12.

The afternoon newspapers had the story of Nat's visit to the murdered man a few hours before his untimely death, and intimated that the young broker had furnished the police with a valuable clue that was expected to lead to the arrest of the perpetrators of the crime.

The papers that devoted space to financial news had a good deal to say about the rise of Idaho Copper, and prophesied a general boom in all copper properties.

The result of this was that the Curb market did more business in copper stocks next day than it had for months back, Idaho Copper going to 16.

Nat wrote a letter to Merwin White, telling him how the market stood, though he did not doubt that that gentleman was keeping himself well informed on the subject.

Joe Miller came in while Nat was addressing the envelope.

"Say, you know Ed. Sackett?" said Joe, seating himself beside the desk.

"I ought to, seeing he's been dad's messenger these two years. What about him?"

"He's been monkeying with the market, like a lot of other messengers. He put up the whole of his last week's wages on D. & J. in a bucket shop, and lost it as slick as a whistle."

"Serves him right. He ought to know better," replied Nat.

"He's in trouble with his mother over it. He turns his wages in at the house, but on account of this deal he had on hand he didn't come up with last week's pay envelope. His mother demanded an explanation and he told her that your father was out of town and in consequence he didn't get paid. He promised to give it to her some time this week. When his deal went up the spout, and he saw no chance of getting the money, he realized that he was in for it, for the old lady is a Tartar. Now what do you suppose he had the nerve to tell her?"

"How should I know?"

"Instead of telling her he had lost his coin in Moseby & Co.'s bucket shop, he told her he had invested it with you."

"With me?"

"Yes. And now the old lady is coming down here to go gunning for you."

"The dickens she is."

"Nothing surer," laughed Joe. "You're bound to see her, so when she comes in tell her the truth of the matter and send her to Moseby & Co. If she doesn't get her money back from that firm she'll make Rome howl there, you can take my word for it."

"That's a pretty trick for Ed. to play on me. I must tell dad to give him a laying out for it. Here, take this letter to the branch station for me, and when you come back we'll go uptown," said Nat.

Joe took the letter and went out.

Soon afterward the office door opened and admitted a short stout woman.

She looked mad about something, and wasted no time in preliminaries but sailed right in.

"Are you Nat Nye?" she asked, with blood in her eye.

"Yes, madam," replied Nat, politely, suspecting who his visitor was.

"Then I want the eight dollars you took from me b'y to put into stocks that busted."

"You are in error, madam. I didn't take your son's money. In fact, I didn't—"

"Tryin' to chate me, are ye? I'll let ye know I'm not to be bamboozled."

The old lady seized the young broker by the shoulder with one hand and with the other she raised up her satchel.

His startled cry brought Joe in on a run, shouting:

"Hey! Hey! You've got the wrong party!"

"Yes, madam," said Nat, warding off the threatened attack. "You've got into the wrong place. I haven't seen your son Ed, for I presume you are Mrs. Sackett, this week. He put his money up with Moseby & Co., No. — Broadway. You'd better go and see them about it."

It took some argument to convince the irate woman that Nat was not responsible for the loss of her son's wages, but she was finally induced to leave, and the boys, looking out of the window, saw her sailing toward Broadway as fast as she could go.

"Moseby & Co. have my sympathy," chuckled Joe, as he shut down the window.

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH THE MENDED NOTE TURNS UP.

Several days passed during which time great excitement took place in the Curb market as Idaho Copper boomed steadily up to 30.

Nat was in the seventh heaven of satisfaction, for his profit in sight amounted to something over \$40,000.

"I guess there's no Jonah about this deal," he said to himself. "I wouldn't be surprised if it went to 40 by the way things look, but I'm not going to chance it. I think I'll send word to Mr. White to cash in, too, as he has 3,000 shares which represent a profit of \$60,000."

Nat was sitting at his desk at the moment, and he thought how surprised his father would be when he told him of his big winnings.

Just then the door opened and in walked Mr. Merwin White—at least Nat took it for granted it was he, as he wasn't looking for his brother to pay him a third visit.

Nevertheless Nat was on his guard, and after greeting his visitor cordially he glanced at the little finger of his right hand and saw that no ring adorned it.

That was further, but still not conclusive, evidence that he was in the presence of the retired capitalist.

"I came down to order you to sell my Idaho Copper," said Mr. Merwin White. "I prefer not to take any more chances with it."

"I think you're right, sir. I am going to sell my own. I was just considering about sending a messenger to your house advising you to sell. As I put you on to the stock I want to see you make a success of your deal."

"It was a very successful pointer you gave me, and I am greatly obliged to you for it," replied his visitor.

"Don't mention it, Mr. White. I have innocently caused you quite a large loss in those D. & G. bonds, and I am happy to be able to put you in the way of making good your loss. By the way, I suppose you haven't heard from the securities since your brother got them out of my hands?"

"Yes I have."

"Then you think you will be able to recover them?"

"I have recovered them."

"That's good. I'm glad to hear it."

"My brother called on me last night, made a full confession of his part in the burglary of my house, saying he was forced into it owing to a hold one of his associates had got on him through a gambling debt, and returned me the bonds."

"You don't say," replied Nat, quite astonished.

"He promised me that he would mend his ways, and so I forgave him."

Nat, knowing how much Merwin thought of his erring brother, was not surprised at that news.

"He asked me to apologize to you for the double trick he played upon you, and assured me that he wouldn't attempt to pass himself off on you again as me."

"I hope he'll keep his word."

"I think he will, particularly as I told him he wouldn't find it so easy the next time."

"No, I don't want to be made a fool of the third time. Well, I'll make out the order for the sale of Idaho Copper and you can sign it."

Nat did so and Mr. White signed it.

"You may bring the money to my house to-morrow night," he said.

"I'll bring you my father's check, and you can deposit it. You see as I'm under age I am for the present debarred from carrying a business account at any bank, so when I get the broker's check I'll transfer it to my father in exchange for his, made out to your order, less my commission," said Nat.

"Oh, very well, that will do," said Mr. White, with a look of disappointment that vanished from his face as quickly as it had appeared. "You will make a good thing out of this rise in Idaho Copper, too, I believe?" he added.

"Yes, I expect to clear at least \$40,000," replied Nat.

"You are fortunate. That is a large sum for a boy of your age to make in such a short time. It will add largely to your business capital."

"Yes, sir. I'm in business to make money, you know," smiled Nat.

"By the way, can you change a \$1,000 note for me?"

"Yes, I can do that."

"Thank you, I will consider it a favor."

Nat opened his safe, took out eight \$100 and four \$50 bills.

Mr. White opened his pocketbook and produced his note which he laid on Nat's desk, face up.

Nat glanced at it casually, saw it was a \$1,000 bill and passed the smaller notes to his visitor, who then got up and said it was time for him to go.

Nat accompanied him to the door.

"I'll expect to see you at my house to-morrow night," said Mr. White. "Make it not later than eight, as I have an engagement at my club soon after that hour."

"All right, sir."

Mr. White departed and Nat returned to his desk.

When he picked up the note he saw it was a mended one and mechanically turned it over.

Then he saw to his astonishment that it had been repaired with a coffin-shaped strip of blood-red paper.

"My goodness!" he exclaimed, staring at it.

He examined it closer and saw the Washington Trust Co. stencil stamp on the paper.

"Why, it's the very bill I paid to Abel Brett," he cried. "How came it in the hands of Mr. Merwin White? He couldn't have got it through his bank, for I doubt if any bank would send out such a bill. Somebody must have paid it to him very lately or he would have deposited it. Who could that be? His brother called on him last night. It is possible that Alfred White had any connection with the crime in the Bronx? Led into it by that crook pal of his? Lord, his brother would be terribly cut up at the mere suspicion of such a thing. Now what shall I do about this bill? It is one of the chief clues the police are depending on to catch the two villains who are responsible for the old man's death. I suppose I ought to take it to Headquarters and explain how it came into my possession. A detective then would call on Mr. Merwin White for his explanation, and if the trail led to his brother I'm afraid he wouldn't forgive me. The only way is for me to call on Mr. White this evening and have a talk with him about the bill. But then that may defeat the ends of justice. If he got it from his brother he will certainly take it back and probably destroy it to prevent any trouble coming to Alfred, if he has the least suspicion that his brother is guilty of the crime."

Nat was much puzzled as to the course he ought to pursue.

He wanted to help the police bring the murderers to justice, yet he did not want to bring trouble on his friend and patron, Merwin White.

Finally he put the note in his safe, clapped his hat on his head and went down to the Curb.

Idaho Copper was up to 34.

At that figure he found a purchaser right away for his 2,000 shares.

That gave him a profit of \$50,000 on his deal.

Then he sold Merwin White's shares to three different brokers who were looking for the stock to fill orders.

His customer would clear over \$70,000, and Nat was glad of it.

The boy's interest in Idaho Copper having ceased he returned to his office.

When he was ready to go home he placed the repaired \$1,000 note in his pocketbook, having decided to call on Merwin White that evening.

At supper he told his father about the coup he had made in Idaho Copper.

Nye, Sr., looked decidedly surprised.

"That doesn't look as if I were a Jonah," said Nat, triumphantly.

"You may not be a Jonah to yourself, but you have been to others," replied his father.

"I put a customer of mine up to getting in on copper. He bought 3,000 shares, and to-day I sold him out at a profit of over \$70,000. That proves I'm not a Jonah to everybody," returned the boy.

"Maybe you've broken the hoodoo," said his parent, with a smile.

"I don't believe I ever was a real Jonah. I just ran into an unlucky streak, that's all, and you got it into your head that everything I touched proved unfortunate."

"Well, we'll see how you come out."

"So far I've come out a whole lot better than if I'd stayed with you. I am glad you shook me, dad, for you have put me in the way of showing what I can do."

"I congratulate you on your good luck; but remember one swallow doesn't make a summer."

"That is as much as to say that I may not hold my end up in the long run."

"I mean that one fortunate transaction is no guarantee of ultimate success," replied Nye, Sr., taking up his evening paper as a hint that he did not care to prolong the discussion.

Nat left the house at half-past seven en route for Merwin White's house.

Mr. White was at home and Nat was taken up to his library as before.

"Glad to see you, Nye," said the gentleman, cordially. "I was going down to your office this afternoon to order my stock sold, but other business prevented me."

"What's that?" gasped Nat. "You were coming to my office!"

"Yes," nodded Mr. White, pleasantly.

Nat sat back and stared at him.

"What's the matter? Why do you look at me like that?"

"Because I was under the impression that you did call."

"What made you think I did?"

"Because I had a visitor so much like you that——"

"It must have been my brother then. Didn't you look for the mark on his thumb?"

"To tell you the truth I didn't. I saw the ruby ring was missing, and as I didn't do any particular business with him I let it go at that."

"What was the object of his visit?" asked Mr. White.

"His object, I should imagine, was to do you out of your Idaho Copper investment, for he ordered me to sell it."

"He did?"

"Yes. And believing I was dealing with you I made out an order, he signed it, and I went out and sold it at 34."

"Oh, well, there's no harm done. I'm glad you sold it. My brother only anticipated my wishes in the matter. He'll probably call for the money to-morrow, but, of course,

you won't give it to him. Bring it in the form of a certified check up here to-morrow night, and then you'll be sure that the right person will get it."

"He told me to bring it up here to-morrow evening himself."

"He did?" exclaimed Mr. White, with an expression of surprise.

"Yes. He specified that I should call not later than eight, as he had an engagement that would take him to the club about that hour."

"Well, you must change your arrangements, for he has some purpose in view, though I can't see how he can cash a large check made out in my name if he got it away from you."

"He might. Nobody could tell that he wasn't you. He could take it to your bank first thing in the morning and cash it. It's a wonder he hasn't robbed you of every cent you have in the bank on forged checks."

"No fear of that. He couldn't cash that check, nor any other, nor could I myself, without going through a certain precautionary formality which I have been forced to provide for my own protection," replied Mr. White, with a smile.

"Oh, then it's all right. Still I'm satisfied that he has designs on your check for the Idaho Copper money."

"I believe you; but you mustn't let him get hold of it. Bring it up here before you go home—say around five or six o'clock, then whatever plans he has in preparation for eight o'clock will go for nothing."

"All right, sir. I'm mighty glad I called to-night."

"Yes, it was fortunate."

"I didn't call, however, with reference to the Idaho Copper matter."

"What then?"

"About a \$1,000 bank note which I thought I cashed for you, but which it now appears I changed for your brother."

"A \$1,000 bank note! He must be flush. What's the matter with the note? Do you suspect that it isn't a good one?"

"It's a good one all right, though it was accidentally torn and repaired. Here it is. You will notice the peculiar coffin-like shape of the piece of paper that was used to piece it together, and the fact that the paper bears the stencil mark of the Washington Trust Co."

"Yes, it is odd, but that does not make the bill less valuable. You have some other reason for bringing it to me."

"I have. A reason I fear that will give you a shock."

"A shock! What do you mean?"

"About a week ago an old man, Abel Brett, was murdered in his home in the Bronx. Perhaps you read an account of the tragedy in the papers at the time?"

"Yes, I remember the affair to which you refer," replied Mr. White.

"About six hours before the old man was killed I visited him for the purpose of inducing him to sell a 1,000-share certificate of Westchester Traction stock. I was acting in the interests of a customer who wanted the shares so badly that I was instructed to offer Abel Brett as much as three points above the market price. I carried a certified check for \$40,000 with me, and two \$1,000 notes. The reason the check was not made for the upset price was be-

cause it was hoped that Brett might sell at a one-point advance, or \$40 a share. He wouldn't, however, and even held out for 43 until he saw that I wouldn't give it. Well, I bought the certificate from him for \$42,000, and in payment gave him the check and the two notes. He put them in his safe. After he was shot the safe was looted by his murderers, who, among other things, carried off the check and the two \$1,000 notes. One of the latter is the bill you hold in your hand."

"How do you know?" asked Mr. White. "By this red strip?"

"Yes. Coupled with the stencil mark and the number which, at the old man's request, I copied in my memorandum book."

"Well," said Mr. White, drawing a long breath, "why have you called my attention to these facts?"

"Because your brother asked me to change that note for him when he called at my office to-day, and I did," replied Nat, watching the effect of his words.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRAP THAT FAILED.

Mr. Merwin White was not slow in understanding the meaning Nat intended to convey to him.

It was—how had this marked \$1,000 note, stolen from the safe of the dead Abel Brett by his assassins, come into the possession of Alfred White?

The explanation was up to Alfred himself.

Mr. White made no reply for a moment, then he said slowly:

"You mean, Nye, that it looks bad for my brother to have this note in his possession?"

"What do you think, sir?"

"I agree with you. It is a serious matter."

"That's why I called to see you about it instead of taking the note directly to the police, as it really was my duty to do. Knowing the great regard you feel for your brother, I hesitated about bringing trouble down on you."

"I appreciate your consideration, Nye, and thank you gratefully," replied the capitalist, with a show of emotion. "The question now is—what is to be done? I cannot believe that my brother had any hand in the crime in question. He must have been asked by one of his shady friends to get the note changed for him."

"If your supposition is correct, whoever asked him to do that is likely to be one of the guilty parties, and in the interests of justice your brother ought to be compelled to disclose the man's identity."

"You are right, but think of the disgrace to our family if it is reported in the newspapers that my brother is on terms of intimacy with persons of shady reputation?"

"Perhaps that can be avoided, sir, if you will make an effort to get your brother to meet you, either here or elsewhere, when you can put the matter up to him, and ask him to give you the name of the man from whom he received the note."

"Your suggestion is an excellent one, and I will act on it. Alfred's disreputable conduct must not be exposed to the public if by any means it can be avoided. You will allow me to keep this note. I will give you its equivalent in other money so that you will suffer no loss."

"I'm afraid I can't let you have it, Mr. White, much as I hate to disoblige you."

"Why not?"

"Because that note is the chief clue the police rely on to detect the murderers of Abel Brett."

"But it will be safe in my hands."

"Ordinarily yes; but in case it should by any means compromise your brother your regard for him would be an irresistible temptation to you to destroy it."

Nat tried to state his convictions in as delicate a way as possible, for he did not want to offend his customer.

Mr. White made no reply, but sat for some moments looking at the rug on which his slippered feet rested.

At length he said:

"Your intention, then, is to hand it over to the police?"

"Don't you think that's my duty? The murder of Abel Brett calls for justice. The fact that your brother has become in some way mixed up with the mystery should not act as a bar to the discovery of the assassins. Much as you care for your brother and the honor of your family, you owe something to the general public, and the general public is interested in the solution of the crime."

"The police will hunt at once for my brother, arrest him, and his connection with criminals will become known, no matter how innocent he may be with regard to this note."

"I will hold the note back for a day or two in order to give you time to communicate with your brother and secure from him the name of the man from whom he got the note. You will make him understand that if he holds back the identity of the person the matter will be probed by the police at once, and he may find himself in a bad box."

Mr. White was silent for several moments and then with a sigh handed the \$1,000 note back to Nat.

"I hope you don't blame me, sir," said the boy, rising to go; "but my conscience won't let me act differently."

"I am not finding any fault with you, Nye. I am simply sorry for my brother—and myself."

Excusing himself for a moment or two Mr. White left the room.

When he returned he accompanied Nat to the hall-door himself and took leave of him.

As the young broker turned down the street, a man, attired in a pilot jacket, with his hat pulled well down to his eyes, came out of the area and followed him.

The man was close behind him when he turned down a side street toward Madison Avenue, but Nat did not seem aware of his presence.

Although it was not yet ten o'clock the street was quite deserted.

The man put his hand in his pocket, drew out a slung-shot and crept upon the unsuspecting lad.

As he raised his arm to strike, Nat stepped on one of the iron covers that protected the hole of a coal cellar.

A dog, perhaps, had dropped a piece of fat on it, for the boy's foot slipped and he half fell just as the weapon whizzed through the air.

The result was it missed his head and struck him a glancing blow on the shoulder, sufficient to attract his attention to the action of the man.

Taking the stranger for a footpad, Nat sprang at him, and they went down on the sidewalk in a heap.

The man uttered a deep imprecation as the weapon fell from his fingers, and he grappled with the boy.

Nat, however, was strong and wiry, and as agile as a young monkey.

He secured a good hold on the fellow's chest and held him down in spite of his efforts to throw him off.

While in that position the light from the nearby gas lamp gave the boy a full view of his face.

He had never seen it before, but he knew he wouldn't forget it, for every lineament stood out before his eyes.

"Well, do you give in, you rascal?" cried Nat.

"No, blame you. Let me up or—"

"Or what?"

"You'll have cause to regret it."

"I'll take the risk," replied the boy, coolly. "You intended to knock me out. To rob me, I suppose. I intend to hand you over to the police."

"That will be the worst job you ever did."

"I don't agree with you. It's a good job to put a fellow of your stamp behind the bars."

"You'll never put me there," hissed the rascal.

With a sudden effort he rolled over, threw Nat from him, sprang on his feet and made off in the darkness.

The young broker had half a mind to give chase, but came to the conclusion that it would be useless, as the man appeared to be a fleet runner.

"I'm sorry he got away," muttered Nat, in a tone of disappointment. "Such scoundrels as he belong in jail."

Spying the slung-shot Nat picked it up.

"That's a wicked weapon," he said. "An iron ball covered with closely wound cord, and attached to a handle. A blow from that would easily fracture a person's skull. I had a narrow escape. Had I been knocked out he'd have got away with the \$1,000 note. That would have been a great pity, though when he tried to change it he'd have found himself up against a bunch of trouble. He is doubtless known to the police, and would have been suspected as one of the men who killed Abel Brett. All things considered he may thank his stars that he failed in his design on me."

By this time Nat had reached the corner and had but a short distance to go to his home.

CHAPTER VIII.

KNOCKED OUT AND ROBBED.

On his way to the office next morning Nat stopped at the safe deposit vaults where he had a box and placed the mended \$1,000 note in it for safe keeping.

He remained at his desk a good part of the morning, having nothing particular on hand, and was reaching for his hat to go out when a smooth-faced man attired in a business suit came in without knocking.

"You are Nat Nye, I believe?" he said.

"That's my name," replied the boy.

"Mr. Merwin White recommended me to call on you as he said you were a smart young broker. My name is Frank Dunn, and I want to buy 100 shares of A. & C. stock on margin."

"I can buy it for you," said Nat, drawing one of his blanks toward him, filling it out and handing it to the customer to sign.

"You require \$1,000 deposit, I believe?"

"Yes, sir—\$10 on each share."

"Will you accept Mr. White's check for \$1,200, and let me have the difference in cash?"

"Did you have it certified?"

"No; is that necessary?"

"Brokers, as a rule, require checks to be certified before accepting them as cash."

"Mr. White is good for the money, as I believe you know."

"Oh, yes; but I prefer not to take his plain check from a second party without it has been certified. This is a precaution all business men adopt."

"Then you won't take it?"

"I'd rather not."

The visitor looked disappointed.

"I'll have to go uptown to Mr. White's bank to get it certified. It will be a great inconvenience to me."

"I am sorry, sir, but——"

"Can't you telephone Mr. White? He is probably at his house now?"

"Very well, I will do so."

Nat looked up Mr. White's number in the book and then asked Central to connect him with 444X Central Park.

In a minute or two a voice said "Hello!"

"Is this Mr. Merwin White's house?"

"Yes," came back the answer.

"Is Mr. White in?"

There was a pause and then the voice said "Yes."

"Ask him to step to the 'phone, please."

A minute elapsed and then a voice that sounded like White's asked "Who are you?"

"Nat Nye."

"Oh! What can I do for you, Nye?"

Nat explained the situation, and Mr. White replied that he could take the check as being all right.

The boy was satisfied, though the guarantee could hardly be called conclusive since he could not swear that it was actually Mr. White who had answered him.

"Well, I'll take the check, Mr. Dunn. Endorse it, please."

Nat got up and went to his safe.

Adjusting the combination he soon had it open.

The moment he swung the door back his visitor sprang to his feet, rushed at him and struck him senseless to the floor.

"Now to secure that marked \$1,000 note for the chief, and whatever coin I can find for myself," he said.

He took the precaution first to turn the key in the lock of the door so that he would not be interrupted in his nefarious designs.

Making sure that the boy broker was dead to the world for the time being he turned to the safe and started to go through it.

Needless to say that he did not find the chief object of his search—the mended note, which was safe in Nat's safe deposit box.

"Where in thunder is it?" he muttered, after pulling everything in the shape of paper from the safe and scattering the stuff on the floor. "Maybe he has it in his pocket."

He went through Nat's clothes in vain, then he ran-

sacked the desk of its few contents, and even looked under the rug.

After exhausting every possible place where it was likely to be he had to give it up.

"The chief will be greatly cut up over my failure to find it, for he has taken some chances in order to pave the way for me; but I can't help it. I've done my best. It isn't in the office. Can he have delivered it to the police? It looks like it. The chief will have to be on his guard."

Having satisfied himself that the mended note was out of his reach, the man proceeded to coolly possess himself of \$300 in bills from the safe, \$15 from the boy's pocket, his gold watch and chain, his diamond pin, and a cameo ring Nat wore on his little finger.

Then he unlocked the door and looked out into the corridor.

Several persons were passing to and fro.

He waited till the corridor was momentarily vacant and then slipped out, locking the door after him, and putting the key in his pocket.

He did not take the elevator down, for prudential reasons, but walked down the stairs and left the building.

Fifteen minutes later Nat recovered his senses and sat up.

His office was in a state of confusion.

It didn't take him but a moment or two to realize what had happened.

He had no suspicion, however, that the object of his visitor had been to get possession of the mended \$1,000 note.

He regarded it as a plain robbery, instigated by the rascally brother of Mr. Merwin White, and figured that the alleged Frank Dunn was some crook associate of Alfred White's.

"This kind of business is getting altogether too strenuous for me," thought Nat. "As long as Alfred White is allowed to do as he pleases he is bound to make more or less trouble for me unless I quit having any business dealings with his brother. I've been in hot water since the day I sold those bonds. If I hadn't promised Merwin White that I'd give him time to see his brother in reference to that \$1,000 note, I'd turn it right over to the police, and put them on to the great resemblance between the two brothers from a physical standpoint. It is my opinion that Merwin will never be able to reform his brother. I am more than half convinced that Alfred was one of the two burglars who killed and robbed Abel Brett. The old woman got a view of one of the men's faces that night, and she says she would know him again. I'm going to call on her and get her description to see if it tallies with my suspicions. If it does I know what my duty will be. Much as I respect and sympathize with Merwin White there is a limit to it when it comes to shielding a murderer or his accomplice from justice."

Nat immediately communicated with Police Headquarters over the 'phone and reported what had happened at his office.

He gave an accurate description of the chap who had represented himself as Frank Dunn, and furnished a list of his losses.

Then he tidied up his office, put on his hat and went over to see his father.

Nye, Sr., was astonished at his son's story of the robbery and assault.

The boy made no mention of his convictions connecting any one else with the outrage, as he did not care to bring the White twins into notice if it could be avoided.

"Have you notified the police?" asked his father.

"Sure. Do you think I'm asleep?"

"It's the first job of the kind that has happened in Wall Street for quite a long time, and will create something of a stir when it is reported in the papers," remarked Nye, Sr.

"Yes, I guess so," replied Nat, getting up and saying good-by.

That afternoon he received checks covering his own Idaho Copper deal and Mr. White's.

He cashed his own and placed the money in his safe deposit box.

The other he turned over to his father, received his commission out of it in cash, and a check made out to the order of Merwin White, for a little over \$72,000.

He took it to his father's bank and had it certified, and at four o'clock went uptown to deliver it to Mr. White.

He was ascending the handsome high-stooped residence on Fifth Avenue, when the front door suddenly opened and a beautiful girl, her hair disheveled and her eyes ablaze with excitement and terror, rushed out and started for the sidewalk.

Following her came a man, whom Nat recognized with surprise as his assailant of the previous evening.

"Save me! Save me!" cried the girl, falling exhausted into the boy's arms.

CHAPTER IX.

ANOTHER FAMILY SKELETON.

The man who was clearly chasing the girl, stopped when he saw Nat and recognized him.

He seemed undecided what to do, and glared furiously at the boy.

"What's the trouble, miss?" asked Nat, who wondered if the girl could be connected with Merwin White's family.

"Take me away. Please do," she cried, hysterically.

"You must tell me what is wrong first," said Nat.

"Please take me away or that man will drag me back to the room where I have been confined a prisoner for weeks."

"Confined a prisoner in that house!" cried Nat, in a tone of astonishment. "Why, this is the residence of Mr. Merwin White. Why should you be kept a prisoner in his house? Surely not with Mr. White's knowledge and consent."

"It is he who is holding me a prisoner until my father pays a heavy sum of money for my release. He abducted me from my home and—"

"Mr. White abducted you!" cried the amazed Nat. "Impossible! Mr. White is a gentleman."

"A gentleman!" cried the girl, feverishly. "He is a wicked man, and the chief of others as bad as himself."

At that point the man whom Nat recognized as a rascal advanced and said:

"This girl is out of her mind. Don't believe a word she says. She is Mr. White's demented daughter, and he keeps

her confined to rooms in the top of the house rather than have her go to a private mad-house."

"No, no," cried the girl, frantically. "He is lying. Don't let him take me back. I have told you the truth."

Nat felt that he was placed in an awkward dilemma.

If what the man said was true, and it did not look unreasonable, he felt that he had no right to interfere in the matter; but his suspicions were, nevertheless, aroused by the presence in Mr. Merwin White's house of the rascal who had attacked him on his way home the night previous.

Why should Mr. White harbor such a man in his home?

It must be because the capitalist was unaware of his true character.

The boy felt that the gentleman ought to be warned against him.

Doubtless the fellow was there in the interest of Alfred White, who probably had further designs on his brother.

While these thoughts were flashing through his brain, another man, who seemed to be a servant, appeared from the area door.

"Is Mr. Merwin White at home?" asked Nat, still undecided how to act.

"Yes," said the man above. "Are you Nat Nye?"

"I am."

"Then he is waiting for you in the library. Bring his daughter up with you."

"I'm not his daughter. If you won't save me, let me go."

She tore herself out of Nat's grasp and fled across the street, pursued by the man who had come out of the area.

The fellow caught her and with a scream she fainted in his arms.

Catching her in his arms he brought her back.

Nat entered the house determined to ask Mr. White if the girl really was his daughter, and not in her right mind.

Entering the library the young broker found the capitalist seated before his desk.

Mr. White greeted him as cordially as usual.

"I've brought you my father's check for the amount due you, and I had it certified. To make sure that you are Merwin and not Alfred show your right thumb. I have got to be careful, you know, where so much money is involved," smiled Nat.

"What, in my own house?" laughed the gentleman, showing his thumb which had not the suspicion of a scar.

"Yes, in your own house. Give me a receipt for the check, please."

Mr. White did so.

"Have you a daughter, Mr. White?" Nat asked.

"Yes. The poor child is of unsound mind and I am obliged to have her constantly watched. I keep her closely confined to her rooms lest she escape from the house and cause trouble. How came you to learn of her existence?"

Nat explained what had just happened on the stoop.

He was surprised that the gentleman wasn't aware of the incident.

"She must have eluded her maid in some way," he said, in a soft tone, "then crept downstairs and unlocked the street door. Persons whose minds are affected are very artful in their movements. It is fortunate that John detected her exit and also that you came along and cut off her

flight. Did she say anything to you?" and an anxious look hovered for a moment on the speaker's face.

"Yes. She called on me to save her and take her away," replied Nat.

"Ah, yes; poor child, she has no idea that she is deprived of her liberty for her own good, but imagines that she is cruelly treated."

"She said she was being held a prisoner in this house till her father paid a heavy ransom for her release," continued Nat.

"That is one of her insane notions. She does not recognize me as her father, but thinks I am some rascal who abducted her from her home. It is a sad affliction, but we must bear as patiently as possible such trials as Heaven sees fit to impose upon us," said Mr. White, with an air of resignation.

"She is a beautiful girl," said Nat. "How long has she been out of her head?"

"Three years."

As the capitalist did not seem to wish to continue the subject Nat branched off on another.

"You referred a moment ago to the man called John," he said. "Might I ask how long he has been in your service?"

"About six months. Why do you ask?" replied Mr. White.

"Because, pardon me for saying so, I do not think he is a proper person for you to have about you."

"Indeed!" replied the capitalist, apparently surprised. "What reason have you for saying so?"

Nat related the incident of the night before.

"You must be mistaken, Nye. John is not that kind of man. Why should he do such a thing, when he has a good position here and good wages? He may look something like the rascal who attacked you, but otherwise I can assure you there is no connection between the two men."

"Well, let it go as you say, sir, but I got a close and perfect view of the chap last night, and the two men look as much alike as you and your brother. I would be willing to swear in court that your John was the person who tried to do me up."

Mr. White shook his head as though he was satisfied that Nat was in error, so the boy said no more on the subject, but proceeded to tell Mr. White about the attack that had been made on him in his office that morning.

The capitalist appeared to be greatly astonished.

"You say the man presented a check for \$1,200 signed by me, and that you telephoned me at the house here about it, and I replied that it was all right?"

"Yes, sir. Of course it couldn't have been you, though the voice sounded something like yours. It proves that there is somebody in your household who is here in your brother's interests, for I'm satisfied that your brother was back of the outrage. May that person not be John?"

"The matter has some strange and unexplainable features, I admit," replied Mr. White. "I deeply regret that you were treated in such a way, and that my house is, in some way, mixed up in the matter. I fear, as you say, that my brother had a hand in it, and that he has an ally in my household. I shall investigate the matter at once, as it concerns me vitally. May I ask if you have that check?"

"I brought it with me to show you," and Nat produced it.

"It is a forgery, but whether executed by my brother, or somebody else, I could not say. Have you notified the police?"

"I have; and furnished them with a description of the rascal who knocked me out, together with a list of what he stole."

"What was the amount of your loss?"

"About \$315 in money, a gold watch and chain, a diamond pin and a ring, in all something like \$500."

"I will make the sum up to you," said the capitalist, "as to a certain extent I was an innocent accomplice of the rascal's."

"It isn't necessary, sir. I don't hold you responsible in any way for the man's actions. I can easily stand the loss," replied Nat.

Mr. White, however, insisted on handing Nat a \$500 bill to make good his loss, and the boy was obliged to accept it.

"I suppose you haven't succeeded in finding your brother yet?" said Nat.

"I got a letter from him, postmarked Boston, and I am going on there to-night to try and see him. I trust you will not hand that \$1,000 note to the police until you hear from me," said Mr. White.

"I will endeavor to oblige you as much as possible," replied Nat, rising.

"I may be away several days. So, until I see you again, I wish you good-by."

Nat shook hands with the capitalist, and John, answering his master's ring, showed the young broker to the door.

CHAPTER X.

HOW NAT PUZZLED THE BROKERS.

On his way home Nat couldn't help thinking a great deal about Mr. Merwin White's beautiful afflicted daughter.

She was the first demented person he had ever seen, and it seemed to him as if her actions had been more natural than crazy.

Still there could be no doubt of her mental condition since Mr. White himself had told him that the poor girl had been out of her mind for three years, and that her hallucination consisted of the belief that she had been kidnapped and was being held a close prisoner for a ransom.

"I've never had so many strange experiences in my life as I've had during the last couple of weeks since I made the acquaintance of Mr. Merwin White and his twin brother," thought Nat. "Whether I'm a Jonah to Mr. White, which can hardly be since I've put over \$70,000 in his pocket, or there is something like a fatality hanging over the family which makes itself felt to every one who has anything to do with them, I can't say; but to tell the truth, I wish I had never met the White twins, although I must say that I like Mr. Merwin very much indeed. He has treated me white, just as his brother has done the reverse. I'm glad to know that his brother is out of the city. I sincerely hope he'll stay away and give me a rest."

The attack on Nat and the robbery of his office was in the afternoon papers, and a good many brokers heard about it, or read the news, before they went home.

Several who knew Nat well called at his office, but found it shut up.

The story was repeated in the morning, with additional particulars which the reporters learned from Nat at his home, and during the forenoon it formed a general topic of conversation in Wall Street.

Nat had a number of visitors, but he told them that the papers had printed about all the facts of the case.

"By the way, Nye, who is that gentleman I saw coming out of your office a few days ago?" asked Broker Greene.

"A few days ago," laughed Nat. "It would be hard for me to recollect the particular person to whom you refer."

"Maybe I can describe him to you? He was a man of medium build, dressed in a Prince Albert coat and a silk hat. He had a long black silky moustache, and his eyes were as dark as sloes."

Nat recognized the description at once.

It answered for both Merwin and Alfred White, and he guessed it was the latter.

As he didn't recognize Alfred as having any connection with his office he said:

"Oh, that was Merwin White, a capitalist, and a customer of mine."

"I don't wish to pass any reflections on your customer, Nat, but he's the dead picture of a noted crook whose photograph I saw in Scotland Yard, the London Police Headquarters, when I was in England last summer."

"That's not very complimentary to Mr. White," replied the young broker. "I can assure you that the gentleman is a very nice man. I have visited him several times at his home in Fifth Avenue."

"Of course I didn't mean to insinuate that your customer and the English crook were one and the same person. I merely was commenting on the extraordinary likeness between them, that was all."

"If the likeness is so good this Mr. White might find himself in an awkward predicament if he visited the English capital," laughed one of the other brokers present.

"Oh, I guess he could establish his identity all right as long as he is a respectable American citizen," said Greene.

"What was the British rascal noted for?"

"He was a sort of Jim the Penman. Lived for a long time in a swell suburb of London, posing as a retired Australian banker. He associated with the highest circles, and was eminently respected by all who had the pleasure, or I should say, the misfortune, of knowing him. He was finally exposed by a shrewd detective put on an important note forgery, and his arrest caused a great deal of excitement. The newspapers were full of the case at the time. He served ten years in Portland Prison, only one count being found against him. He was believed to be implicated in a score of other large forgeries, but the police were unable to bring the necessary evidence against him to secure conviction, so on the whole he got off easy."

"What became of him?" asked the other broker.

"I couldn't tell you," replied Greene. "Went back to Australia probably to exercise his genius at the antipodes."

The two brokers got up, bade Nat good-by, and left.

Nat had now been in business about three weeks, but as far as the traders could make out he didn't appear to be doing any business to speak of.

The question that puzzled the brokers was why he had

left his father and set up for himself when there did not appear to be any reason for it.

As his old man's representative in the Board-room he had had a fine chance to show what was in him as a rising trader, and apparently he had filled the bill.

Apparently he had had no falling out with his father, for he and Nye, Sr., appeared to be on the friendliest of terms.

Then again he was the logical successor of his father to an established and thriving brokerage business, so what necessity was there for him to waste his time working up an entirely new business?

The whole Street was puzzled over the boy's course of action, and perhaps a score or two of the brokers tried all kinds of devices to find out what the boy's object was.

As neither Nat nor his father were saying anything on the subject they did not succeed in getting the slightest clue.

"That boy puzzles me," remarked Greene to his companion, as they walked away from Nat's office. "I've dropped into his office half a dozen times since he put out his shingle and I never found him doing anything; nor did the fact appear to worry him in the least."

"He's managed to get himself into the papers just the same," replied the other. "The first day he opened up he sold \$10,000 worth of stolen bonds to Howard Waters & Co. Next morning the papers said that the thief had got the money from him. Yet he turned up smiling at Waters' office and bought the bonds back. He wouldn't have done that if he had paid out the price to the crook."

"That's right. He wasn't legally responsible, as the bonds were ordinary negotiable ones, almost like money, and he was only bound to use common caution in dealing with the seller."

"He says this Merwin White, whom he called a capitalist, is a customer of his. If he did any business for White some broker would know about it. Well, not a man in the Exchange appears to have acted in any way for Nat Nye since he started out for himself."

"Maybe he has thrown his business over to his father to put through for him?"

"Then he might just as well have stayed in his father's office—in fact he might better have done so and saved office rent."

"His sign says Western mining stocks a specialty. Maybe he's doing all his business on the Curb."

"Well, I'd like to know what he is up to, anyway."

"I'll bet this office of his is only a blind. I wouldn't be surprised if he and his father are up to some scheme by which they expect to take the Street by surprise. It won't be long, perhaps, before we find out that this separation of father and son was only a bluff to deceive the traders. Old man Nye is pretty foxy, and it's likely that Nat takes after him—a chip of the old block."

"We must keep our eyes skinned and see what they are up to, if we can."

Broker Greene agreed that his companion's suggestion was a good one, and he fell in with it.

Quite unconscious of the fact that his motive in opening up for himself was puzzling the brokers of the Street, and worrying their bump of curiosity, Nat continued on as usual.

Every day he expected to hear from Merwin White in relation to his brother, but a week passed and no word reached him from the capitalist.

The police were still making every effort to run down the murderers of Abel Brett, but had not yet made an arrest.

"I think I ought to turn that note over to the police and explain how it came into my hands," thought Nat. "I've given Mr. White ample time to find his brother and have a heart-to-heart talk with him about the note. Probably Alfred White refused to give the chap away who gave him the note to change, and Merwin hesitates to let me know, understanding that I will then tell the police all I know. And that reminds me I intended to see Abel Brett's house-keeper, and get from her the description of the man whose face she saw. I'll go up to the house this afternoon."

Nat left his office at three o'clock, and at half-past four was ringing the bell at the gate of the old Revolutionary mansion.

A hard-looking man answered his ring and asked him what he wanted.

"I'd like to see Mrs. Bunn, the old lady who was house-keeper for Abel Brett," he replied.

"Are you from the police?" glowered the man.

"No."

"What's your name?"

"Nat Nye."

"What do you want with the old woman?"

"I want to talk to her."

"About what?"

"I couldn't tell you. It's private."

"Well, she isn't here now."

"Has she left the house for good?" asked Nat, rather disappointed.

"She's gone to Pennsylvania to see some of her relatives."

"When will she get back?"

"I don't know," growled the man in a surly way.

At that moment an upper window in the house was thrown open, and a woman's head was thrust out.

"Help! Help!" she screamed. "I'm a prisoner here in the hands of——"

She was suddenly pulled back out of sight and the window shut with some violence.

Nat had recognized her, however.

She was Mrs. Dunn, the old woman he had called to see.

CHAPTER XI.

NAT IN A TIGHT FIX.

The boy's suspicions were immediately aroused.

Apparently there was something wrong, for the old woman had declared that she was being held a prisoner in the house by somebody whose identity she had tried to disclose, but had been prevented from doing so.

"That was Mrs. Dunn who screamed from the window just now," he said to the scowling man. "I thought you said she had gone to visit relatives in Pennsylvania?"

"That wasn't her," snarled the man. "That's a crazy woman we are takin' care of till the officers come from the asylum for her."

"That won't do, my man. I know Mrs. Dunn, and that was she," said Nat, sharply.

"You're mistaken," insisted the man. "She's a crazy woman, I tell you."

At that moment another man came out of the house to learn what the discussion at the gate was about.

He, too, had an evil look, and Nat saw that his hair was cropped short in prison fashion, while his sallow face was smoothly shaven.

"What's the trouble here?" he inquired, roughly.

"This boy came here to see Mrs. Dunn," said the first man. "I told him that she's away in Pennsylvania, but he says that there crazy woman on the top floor, who yelled out just now, is Mrs. Dunn."

"I know it's Mrs. Dunn," said Nat. "What have you got her shut up on the top floor for?"

"You know it's Mrs. Dunn, do you," said the second man, with an evil look. "Come with me, and I'll show you that she isn't."

Nat, however, was wary.

He didn't feel like trusting himself in the house under the circumstances.

He determined to go to the nearest police station and tell the captain, or his representative, what was going on at the Waite mansion.

So he declined to accompany the newcomer on the scene, and turned to go away.

"Hold on," said the man, making a grab for him. "I ain't goin' to let you go to the police and tell 'em that there's somethin' crooked in the wind here. You come in and see the woman, and then you'll know we're tellin' you the truth."

"No, I'm not taking any chances with you chaps," replied Nat.

Hardly were the words out of his mouth when both men sprang upon him, grabbed him, and dragged him inside the gate, which was slammed to, shut and locked.

Then they rushed him across the lawn and in through the front door of the old mansion.

"Keep a good grip on him, Jim. I've got to see the chief," said the man who had led in the capture of the young broker.

"I'll see that he doesn't get away till he's allowed to," grinned the other.

The first speaker went upstairs, and the other man pushed Nat into a chair.

"What kind of outrage do you call this?" cried the boy, mad clean through. "If you think I'm going to stand for it you're much mistaken."

He jumped on his feet, but the man grabbed him and tried to force him back into the chair.

Nat jabbed him in the wind, which caused him to release his hold with a grunt.

Then boy then started for the door.

The fellow was after him in a moment.

Nat dodged his outstretched hand and smashed him a blow in the face that bowled him over on the floor as clean as a whistle.

Taking advantage of his chance the young broker unlocked the door, swung it open and passed outside.

He dashed for the gate and reached it, but somewhat to his dismay found that the key was not in the lock.

As the wall was a high brick one his further progress in that direction was effectually barred.

He turned to find the rascal he had knocked down coming for him with blood in his eye.

Nat started to elude him and cross the grounds to some other point where the obstacles to escape were not so serious.

As he ran his pursuer uttered a succession of shouts that attracted another man to one of the side doors.

This chap lost no time in taking a hand in cutting Nat off.

Presently a third man joined in the effort to capture the plucky boy, and he was cornered under an ancient oak tree.

He put up a stout fight, but the three men were too much for him and he was borne to the ground.

While two held him the third got a piece of clothesline and bound his arms behind him.

Taking him by the elbows two of the chaps marched him back to the old mansion.

"You'll pay dearly for this," Nat said angrily to his captors.

As he spoke his eyes happened to rest on one of the second story windows, and there he saw, looking down at him, one of the White twins.

Of course he couldn't be the Fifth Avenue capitalist, so Nat was satisfied he was that gentleman's rascally brother Alfred.

Nat was taken back into the hall where he saw the man who had gone upstairs coming down to meet them.

"Bring him along," he said to the others, and he led the way through a rear door into a passageway, at the end of which was a door communicating with the cellar stairs.

Nat was forced to go down.

The chap who walked in advance illuminated the gloom by striking a match now and then.

Finally they reached a rough wooden door of what had once upon a time been the wine bin of the house.

It was kept closed by a hasp and a staple.

Nat was thrust into the dusty, cobwebby enclosure, the door secured on him, and the men went away, leaving him to his own reflections, which naturally were not very exhilarating.

After a time Nat's eyes became used to the gloom, and he walked up and down the confined space, which was littered with old boxes and the outlines of wine bottle supporters that were falling to pieces through age.

A couple of hours passed and then he heard approaching footsteps echoing along the cellar.

Presently he saw the flash of a light through the cracks of the bin.

The steps and the light came to a stop outside his prison pen, the door was opened and two men entered, one of them bearing a lamp.

He was one of the ruffians who had captured him, while the other was Alfred White, for Nat reasoned it couldn't be Merwin.

At any rate if he needed further assurance he saw the glowing ruby ring on the little finger of his right hand, and a sharp glance at his thumb showed a red mark along it, which seemed to be a healed scar.

"I'm sorry to find you here, Nat Nye," said White, stroking his silky moustache.

"Yes, you look sorry," replied the boy, sarcastically.

"What errand brought you to this house?" asked the rascally twin.

"I guess you know by this time," returned Nat, coolly.

"I heard you came to see an old woman named Dunn, formerly housekeeper for the man who lived here for many years, and lost his life through the accidental discharge of a revolver in the hands of a man who paid him an unexpected night visit."

"Accidental discharge of a revolver is a good way to cover up deliberate murder," retorted Nat. "I did come to see Mrs. Dunn, but I did not expect to find the old woman a prisoner and the house in possession of a gang of crooks," added the boy, boldly.

White smiled and stroked his moustache again.

"You are not very complimentary considering that I am in the house," he said.

"I don't make any exception in your favor, Mr. Alfred White. You are clearly a member of the bunch, and therefore tarred with the same brush."

"Thank you," replied White, with a pleasant smile which made him look more than ever like his brother Merwin.

"Oh, you're welcome. Now I'd like to ask you a question."

"Ask it."

"How long am I to be kept a prisoner in this hole?"

"Really I couldn't tell you, dear boy, as I have nothing to say in the matter."

"Perhaps you'll tell this man to release my arms?"

"I will if you promise me on your word of honor that you will make no effort to escape."

"You are willing to take my word, are you?"

"Certainly. You are a young gentleman and if you pass your word I believe you will keep it."

"You have more confidence in me than I have in you, Mr. White."

"You are most refreshingly frank."

"I like to say what I mean, though I admit that it is not always good policy to do so," replied Nat, who was indifferent whether he insulted the White twin or not.

"You regard me as an exception, I suppose," said White, with a wicked smile.

"I regard you as a foolish man."

"Indeed!" replied White, with a slight sneer.

"Yes. You have a wealthy brother who thinks the world of you, who would do anything for you that you might ask if you would only reform your life and become a respectable member of society. Yet you prefer the society of ruffians far below you in the social scale, and would rather do a crooked act than an honest one. You are a puzzle to me."

White listened to the boy with a queer look on his face.

"You seem to have a hard opinion of me," he said dryly.

"Why shouldn't I? Have I any reason to have any other kind of an opinion of you? First, you come to my office, represent yourself as your brother, and get me to sell \$10,000 worth of stolen bonds for you. Then when your brother gives me the money to buy back those bonds you take advantage of your likeness to him to get the bonds away from me. Once more you work the old dodge on me to get hold of the proceeds of your brother's Idaho Copper investment; but fortunately you failed in that. I saw to it that he got his money and you got left."

White regarded Nat with a quizzical smile.

"We will return to the question of your arms being released. Will you promise not to try to escape if you are allowed the free use of your arms and the freedom of the cellar?" he said.

"No, I won't make any such promise," replied Nat doggedly.

"You might just as well, for you can't escape anyway."

"I won't accept any terms from persons who have treated me without gloves."

"If I set you free altogether, will you promise to keep away from the police, and not say anything about what has happened in this house?"

"Is that all you want me to promise?" asked Nat.

"No, there is another thing you've got to agree to do."

"What is that?"

"Bring me to-morrow morning the \$1,000 repaired note that you changed for me in your office a week ago."

"I decline both propositions," replied Nat, resolutely.

"Then you will remain here till you agree to do as I wish," said White, in a menacing tone, signing to his companion to leave.

White followed the man outside, the door was shut and secured once more, and Nat was left to himself again.

CHAPTER XII.

A STRANGE DISCOVERY.

An hour later Nat heard footsteps and saw a light coming his way again.

The door opened and two men entered the bin.

Neither was White.

One carried a lamp and the other a tray of food, which looked pretty good to the boy, for he was hungry.

The man with the tray put it down on the top of a box, while the man with the lamp shifted it to his left hand and drew a revolver.

Then he nodded to his companion, who released the boy's arms.

"Eat your supper. You needn't hurry—we have lots of time," said the chap with the weapon, with a grin.

Nat made no reply, but believing nothing was to be gained by refusing good food when it was offered to him, drew up another box and began his meal.

It tasted as good as it looked, and he felt better after he had cleaned up the dishes.

His arms were retied and the men departed.

The food had instilled fresh strength and courage into Nat, and soon after the men were gone he began an effort to release his arms from limbo.

He was determined to succeed this time and he did.

Inside of half an hour he had recovered the full use of his arms.

"Now I wonder if I can get out of this bin?" he mused.

Pulling out his match-safe he struck a light and looked around.

The boards that composed the bin were old and weak.

Nat saw that it would not be a difficult matter to force a couple of them so as to enable him to get out.

He was afraid the noise he made would bring one or more of the crooks to the cellar, but it didn't, and before long

the freedom of the entire space under the old house was his.

Consulting his watch he saw that it was nine o'clock.

"It's too early for me to think of trying to leave the house yet. I'd be sure to run against some of those rascals and then my name would be Dennis. I've got to curb my impatience. Slow and sure is the program under the circumstances. I mustn't spoil a good beginning by undue haste to get free. If I only can get away without the knowledge of White and his associates, I'll have a squad of policemen back here in short order, and we'll run the gang to the station so quick that it'll take their breath away."

So Nat sat down in the dark and waited.

Ten was too early to make a move so he waited till eleven.

Even eleven was much too soon, as crooks, he figured, were a sort of night owl.

Anxious to be doing something he crept up the stairs and tried the door of the cellar.

It was not locked as he had feared it might be.

He stuck his head out in the dark passage and listened. The house seemed to be wrapped in perfect silence.

This encouraged him, so he removed his shoes and ventured out of the cellar altogether.

Trying the first door at hand he found it led into the kitchen.

It was a long, low-ceiled room, dark with smoke and age.

A table stood in the center of it, on which stood a lighted lamp.

Two of the men who had assisted in his capture were seated at it playing cards for stakes.

Nat had only opened the door a couple of inches, and he closed it quickly and quietly.

He was on the point of returning to the cellar to put in another waiting spell, when it struck him that there were other ways of getting out of the house.

The next door led into the main hall with the wide stairs near at hand.

The hall door was before him some yards away.

"If the key is in the lock I can get out without waiting longer," he told himself, his heart beating with excited anticipation.

A dim light burned in a lamp hanging from the ceiling near the door.

Another lighted lamp hung near the wide staircase.

As he started for the hall door he heard the kitchen door open in the passage behind him and the two men came out, talking.

"Good gracious, how unfortunate!" he cried. "If they come this way they'll see me. I must get into this room."

He grabbed the handle of the door, but it was locked and the key was gone.

Sooner than chance another door he dashed upstairs in his stocking feet.

The men came into the hall.

Leaning over the balusters Nat saw they were coming up.

On the spur of the moment he ran up the next flight and reached the landing of the third flight.

Trying the first door at hand he found it locked, but the key was in it, and turning it he entered the room, which was dark.

Closing the door on a crack he listened for indications showing that the two men were coming up there.

The shutting of a door on the floor below told him that they had entered a room down there, and he breathed easier.

He struck a match and looked around the room.

It was a fairly well furnished bedroom.

The bed was an old-fashioned four-poster—that is each corner post rose to a height that brought it close to the ceiling.

A light curtain completely enclosed the bed, with the two ends loose in front for a person to get in and out.

Such beds were the fashion one hundred years ago.

As the match expired in his fingers it struck the boy that some one was in the bed, no doubt asleep.

It occurred to him that it might be the old woman, for this was the third floor.

He listened and heard a low breathing.

Striking another match and shading it with his hand he approached the bed.

Pulling the curtain aside he allowed the light to fall on the bed.

Lying there, fully dressed, was a young girl, and not the old woman.

As his eyes fell on her face he gave a gasp of astonishment.

It was the beautiful girl whom Merwin White claimed as his demented daughter.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

The flash of the light on the girl's eyes awoke her and she sat up before Nat could withdraw, if he had any immediate intention of doing so.

She gazed at him with a frightened look.

"Don't be alarmed, Miss White," said Nat, soothingly.

"My name is not White. Who are you?" she said, looking at him earnestly. "I have seen you before, but not in this house."

"Yes, I met you once before, when you were trying to escape from your home on Fifth Avenue," said Nat, hardly knowing how to carry on a conversation with a person who was afflicted with hallucinations, as Merwin White had said his daughter was.

"My home on Fifth Avenue!" she exclaimed. "You mean the house where I was held prisoner for several weeks until I was brought here the other day. Yes, I remember now. I might have got away but for you. I appealed to you to save me, but you permitted those men to catch me and take me back into the house, so I suppose you, too, are in league with them, though you do not look like that kind of a boy."

"I would have stood by you, Miss White, had I really believed that you needed my aid; but——"

"Why do you persist in calling me Miss White? My name is Edith Brooks."

"I was abducted from my home in Brooklyn, a few days after my father and mother sailed for Europe, after leaving me in the care of my aunt, by two men who called at the house in a carriage with a forged message from my aunt asking me to come in the cab to the residence of a friend in New York. I was taken to the Fifth Avenue house

where you saw me, and then discovered that I was the victim of a plot to extort a ransom from my father. This plot was the work of the leader of a gang of thieves, who, in the guise of a retired capitalist, made the house his headquarters until something happened that caused him to make a sudden change to this place, and I was transferred here in the dead of night a week ago. Yet why do I tell you this, since the fact of you being here would imply that you probably know all the facts about me that I have stated?"

Nat listened to her in the utmost astonishment.

A suspicion flashed through his mind that this girl was not demented after all, for never had he heard a person talk more sensibly than she.

Another suspicion also struck him that almost took his breath away.

"I know nothing about you, miss. I did not know you were in this house. I am here because I have been a prisoner in the cellar since late this afternoon when I called here to see an old woman named Dunn, who was housekeeper to the old man, Abel Brett by name, who was killed and robbed in this house by two burglars who I believe are connected with the gang now in possession of this mansion. When I asked for her at the gate I was told she had gone to Pennsylvania to visit relatives; but while the man who answered my ring was telling me that, one of the windows on this floor was raised and I saw the old woman stick out her head and call for help. Then I knew the man was lying to me. To prevent me from going to the police and reporting my discovery I was captured and imprisoned in the cellar, from which I have but just made my escape. I came up here to get away from two of the rascals, who, without knowing it, cut off my attempt to escape by the front door."

"Are you telling me the truth?" she asked earnestly.

"I am."

"And yet you were going into that Fifth Avenue house the day I tried to make my escape from it," she said, looking at him doubtfully, in the dark.

"I was going in to see Mr. Merwin White, whom I have always regarded as a fine man and a gentleman."

"He is a rascal, and that is not his real name, but one of the several he assumes to suit his purposes."

"You cannot mean that, miss," replied Nat, unwilling to believe that Merwin White was other than he had represented himself to be. "You have reference, I am sure, to his twin brother, Alfred, who is connected with the gang in possession of this house."

"His twin brother!" said the girl, looking at him strangely. "Is it possible you are one of those he has deceived by that trick?"

"What trick?" asked Nat.

"He has no twin brother."

"No twin brother!" gasped Nat. "Why——"

"No. He himself is both Merwin and Alfred White, assuming either character when it suits his purpose to do so. He represents Alfred as viciously inclined, and responsible for all his own wicked deeds, while he poses as a man of high and respectable character under the name of Merwin."

"My gracious!" exclaimed Nat, fairly overcome by the revelation, which accounted for many things that had heretofore puzzled him.

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"Neither name is his right one, for I have learned that he is an Englishman, named Laban Brood, and that he has been confined in an English prison for many years, for forgeries committed in London."

"Great Scott! Is that so?" cried Nat, as the recollection of Broker Greene's story of the Australian crook flashed across his mind.

"Yes, it is so," replied Edith Brooks, and then she explained how she had learned all the foregoing facts from time to time while under guard in the Fifth Avenue house.

There were two or three points, however, which did not seem to fit in with the girl's story.

One of them was the appearance at the library window of a face exactly resembling Merwin White's while that gentleman stood before Nat.

He mentioned it to the young lady.

"I can't explain that," she replied. "It may have been a prepared mask that you saw somewhat imperfectly in the dark."

"That's true," admitted Nat.

The other point that required explanation was the statement of Joe Miller—that he had seen a man on Broad Street similar in every respect to White, at the very time that White was in Nat's office.

It struck the young broker that Joe must have erred about the exact time, which was really the case, though Miller never would admit it when subsequently questioned on the subject.

At length Nat woke up to the reality of his position, and striking a match saw by his watch that it was close on to midnight.

"We must get away from this house, Miss Brooks," he said.

"Do you think we can?" she asked eagerly.

"Put on your hat and jacket, and we will make the attempt. I will get you away or be recaptured myself," he replied resolutely.

While she was getting ready Nat stepped outside the door and listened for any sounds that would indicate the whereabouts of the rascals in the house.

The mansion, however, was as still as though uninhabited.

Taking the girl by the hand he led her down the carpeted stairs to the floor below.

Then it was that he heard conversation in one of the rooms, and saw a bright light streaming under the door.

Looking through the keyhole Nat saw Laban Brood, the rascal who had masqueraded as the White twins, sitting at a table with half a dozen rough-looking chaps, among whom the boy recognized the man who had assaulted him on the street, and also the rascal who had called at his office and knocked him out there.

They were drinking, smoking and playing cards around a large table, quite unconscious that their two most important prisoners were at liberty, and in the act of "flying the coop."

With great caution Nat led Edith down to the main floor and over to the front door, the key of which stood in the lock.

It was the work of but a few moments for them to get outside in the open air.

Knowing that the gate was locked, and there as no

means of sealing the front wall, Nat took the girl to the rear of the grounds, where they found means of leaving the enclosure without great difficulty.

"We will now hunt up the nearest police station and tell our stories," said Nat; "and I hope we shall soon have the gang behind the bars."

They walked nearly to the elevated station before they met with a policeman, and he directed them to the police station, where they arrived a quarter of an hour later.

The story they had to tell rather surprised the captain, who happened to be in the place when they arrived.

The captain lost no time in making his plans for raiding the old Waite mansion.

A patrol wagon was loaded with officers and started off, Nat going with them, while Edith was put in charge of the matron of the station for the night.

Nat led the cops to the rear of the grounds, as the easiest point of entry to the place, and they were soon at the front door.

It was open just as Nat had left it.

The officers marched softly upstairs to the second floor, and then, as arranged, the boy opened the door and walked in alone.

His appearance proved a great surprise to Laban Brood, as well as the others.

"How did you get out of the cellar, dear boy?" asked the rascal, masking his real feelings under a suave smile.

"I walked out, Mr. Brood," replied Nat, with a grim smile.

At the mention of his real name, Brood sprang from his chair, and a dark look came over his face, while a smothered imprecation rose to his lips.

"Don't get excited, Mr. Brood, alias Merwin and Alfred White. Take things coolly. Your game is up and you might as well give up without making any trouble."

Thus speaking Nat threw open the door and the officers sprang into the room.

The bunch were taken off their guard, and were easy victims.

While they were being handcuffed, Nat went upstairs and investigating the different rooms found Mrs. Dunn asleep in one of them.

He awoke her and told her that the crooks had been captured and the mansion was once more in her charge.

Nat then rode back to the station-house with the prisoners, most of the cops being obliged to walk for lack of room in the vehicle.

After promising to appear at the police court in the morning Nat took a train and went home.

When the prisoners were arraigned for their examination before the magistrate, Nat, Edith and Mrs. Dunn testified against them.

The latter pointed Brood out as the burglar whose face she had seen the night the mansion was entered and Abel Brett murdered and robbed.

The whole bunch were held for the action of the Grand Jury.

They were subsequently tried and got their just deserts.

The newspapers made a sensation out of the rounding up of the crooked gang, and the clearing up of the mystery which had surrounded the assassins of old Brett.

Nat got most of the credit for the capture of the crooks,

and all Wall Street could talk of little else than the exploit of the young broker whose motives in cutting loose from his father, and setting himself up as an independent trader, was such a puzzle to them all.

Nat took Edith home to her aunt.

The good lady had been broken-hearted over the mysterious disappearance of her niece, who had been away two months.

Nat held quite a reception in his office that afternoon.

At least a score of brokers whom he knew well called upon him and complimented him upon the part he had played in rounding up a dangerous gang of crooks, and in rescuing a fair young girl from their clutches.

"Is she pretty?" asked Broker Greene.

"Is who pretty?" asked Nat.

"Why, this girl you assisted to escape from the crooks—Miss Brooks, I think you said her name was."

"Yes, she's as pretty as a peach."

"I suppose this is the beginning of a romance that will ultimately end at the altar," laughed the broker, and the others present joined in, too.

"I wouldn't advise you to bet any money on it," replied Nat, with a slight blush. "It doesn't follow that, because I rescued her from a strenuous situation, I will marry her, or that she would have me even if I wanted her."

"Well, I've got \$100 to bet that you do marry her," chuckled Greene. "Who of you gentlemen will take me up?"

A trader named Gray said he'd take him up if he offered odds.

That provoked another laugh, and finally the bunch went away.

"I've just discovered that the Street is much puzzled over you," said Nye, Sr., at dinner that evening to his son.

"What are they puzzled about?" asked Nat. "At the frequency with which I have got into the limelight of the newspapers of late?"

"No. They are puzzled to account for you breaking loose from me and setting up for yourself. It looks so odd that they can't understand it."

"If they knew you shook me because you considered me a Jonah they wouldn't be worried about the matter any more. Well, I admit I have been a Jonah in some respects, for I have certainly been one to Laban Brood and his associates, but as long as I'm not a Jonah to myself I don't care. I don't mind puzzling the brokers, but it never would do for me to be a real Wall Street Jonah."

THE END.

Read "WIRELESS WILL; OR, THE SUCCESS OF A YOUNG TELEGRAPH OPERATOR," which will be the next number (223) of "Fame and Fortune Weekly."

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GOOD STORIES.

When a traveler in Baden desires to send a telegram while he is on the train, he writes the message on a post-card, puts on a stamp, and drops it into the letter-box. At the next station the box is emptied and the message sent.

A lady in Paris, during a violent quarrel with her husband, hurled a soda-water siphon at him. He dodged, and it missed him; it went through a window, dropped into a passing motor-cab and exploded like a bomb. The four occupants of the cab were seriously cut about the face and hands.

The Memorial Baptist Church, of Hartford, Conn., has experienced a great falling off in the attendance of married women. Their excuse is that they had to attend to their children. The trustees are about to annex a "bawl-room," for the reception and care of children while the mothers are attending to their religious devotions.

There is a good fishing place over in Greene County, N. Y., which is but little visited, and where there are said to be black bass "as long as your arm." It is called Black Lake, a short distance beyond Greene's Lake, but to get to it one has to go among rattlesnakes, and it is the snakes that keep the fishermen away from the lake. A German who has a truck farm near the lake and who brings loads of vegetables to Hudson every spring and summer says the rattlesnakes are so numerous that he has been trying to get some of his neighbors to combine with him and buy half a dozen razorback hogs to let loose in the neighborhood and destroy the snakes, but his neighbors do not feel so inclined, and the snakes flourish.

At a place called Kotron on the French Ivory Coast the natives believe that to eat or destroy a turtle would mean death to the guilty one or sickness among the family. The fetich men, of whom there are plenty, declare that years ago a man went to sea fishing. In the night his canoe was thrown upon the beach empty. Three days afterward a turtle came ashore at the same place with the man on its back alive and well. Since that time they have never eaten or destroyed one of that species, although they enjoy other species. If one happens now to be washed ashore there is a great commotion in the town. First the women sit down and start singing and beating sticks, next a small piece of white cloth (color must be white) is placed on the turtle's back. Food is then prepared and placed on the cloth, generally plantains, rice and palm oil. Then amid a lot more singing, dancing and antics of the fetich people it is carried back into the sea and goes on its way rejoicing.

Many accidents to boats have been caused by tarpon. Claude Curran, of San Antonio, Tex., tells of an experience he had not long ago. He chartered a boat at Corpus Christi in which to make a trip to the fishing grounds near Turtle Cove. He loaded the cabin up with food supplies, including eggs, molasses, bread and various other kinds of edibles, for the cruise. He and a trained boatman composed the crew. "I was doing the steering," Mr. Curran said, "and we were going along at a lively clip, having covered about ten miles, when all of a sudden a huge tarpon leaped out of the water and landed in the cockpit. It slashed around there for a minute or two, and then gave a leap and landed in the cabin. It turned itself loose in the cabin, and in two minutes it had made the place look as if it had been struck by a cyclone. While we were discussing what to do to get rid of the fish the monster gave a terrific leap out of the cabin and again landed in the cockpit. It made another leap and landed overboard, and with a parting swish of its silvery tail it disappeared in the water. I went into the cabin to take an inventory of the damage. The fish had broken all the eggs, smashed the jug of molasses into pieces and pasted the sticky stuff, mixed with scrambled eggs, all over the cabin. It had ruined all of our food supplies and played havoc generally. The destruction was so complete that we had to return to Corpus Christi, where the cabin was scrubbed out, repairs made and a new supply of provisions laid in."

JOKES AND JESTS.

"Warmer, with greater humidity," said the weather clerk. "You're giving us hot air," grumbled the people, viewing him with distinct disfavor.

Mr. Snapp—Well, what are you going to do about it? Mrs. Snapp—Oh, don't be in such a hurry. It takes me some time to make up my mind. Mr. Snapp—That's strange. You haven't much material to work with.

Algy—Gwace has a hahwid father. When I awsked him for her hand I said, "Love for your daughter has dwiven me hawf crazy." Cholly—And then, deah boy? "Then the old bwute said, 'Has, eh? Well, who completed the job?'"

Polly—See that girl sitting over there all alone? She has been trying her best for the last ten years to get a husband, but has failed. Dolly—She is good-looking; what's the matter? Polly—Why, she took the prize at Vassar for oratory, and there has been no man with nerve enough to want to be her husband.

The boy hung back when the visitor spoke to him, and his mother was naturally annoyed. "Won't you go to Mrs. Jones, Harold?" she said. "Don't you like me?" asked Mrs. Jones, good-naturedly. "No, I don't!" answered the boy. "Why, Harold!" exclaimed his mother reproachfully. "Well, I got licked for not telling the truth yesterday, and I ain't taking no chances to-day," protested the boy.

Mr. Leslie Ward, the caricaturist, has told an amusing story of how the opinion of a child saved him from the wrath of one of his subjects. A certain gentleman was not pleased with one of "Spy's" drawings of himself; so the artist went to talk the matter over with him. In the course of the interview the "subject" declared that the picture was not a bit like him. Presently the door opened, and the gentleman's little grandchild came in. Going to the table, she picked up the portrait under discussion and innocently exclaimed: "Why, that's grandpa!"

A TEMPLE OF GOLD OR THE LAST OF THE TOLTECS

By Paul Braddon.

The biggest gold nugget brought into camp since Rocky Bar started!

That was the general verdict when Dick Lyons, the young miner from the North, handed in his lump at the assay office.

There was another conviction in the mind of everybody who saw it, and that was the fact that the nugget came from no placer, quartz ledge, pocket or drift. It had the peculiar and exact form of a man's skull.

Dick Lyons did not stake out a claim nor register one with the sheriff, consequently everybody but the youthful miner himself marveled.

Night had fallen over the camp, and when Dick reached Sandy Ellis' barroom he became the cynosure of all eyes, and everybody was full of eager questions.

He was no more than two and twenty, wore rough pants, tucked in the tops of his boots, a blue flannel shirt, with a belt around his waist, in which several dangerous-looking weapons were thrust, and his bronzed face was shaded by a slouched hat. Every lineament of his features portrayed an immense store of determination in his character, and in the width of his shoulders and size of his brawny arms, lurked an amount of strength which was only equaled by another man in Rocky Bar.

This person was Mexican Paco, the herculean gambler, who won all the drunken miners' dust, in a marvelous fashion, and always wore the fanciest of his native costumes.

When the young miner had run the gauntlet of several volleys of questions, the huge Mexican drew him aside in a corner at a table, and while an eager look shone in his snaky black eyes, he said, in low tones:

"You found that nugget in a buried city, Dick Lyons."

"What do you mean by that, Paco?"

"I mean that you did not mine that gold."

"How do you know I didn't?"

"By its shape. It came from a city, under the Sierra Madre."

"You seem to be pretty sure, greaser."

"Carramba! I ought to know. You have found a Toltec temple of the sun."

"Well—and suppose I did accidentally discover a city under the mountain—a city which must have been deserted since the year of grace 1200, when the Aztec race superseded the Chichmeas—the followers of the Toltecs—suppose I did find one of their wonderful treasure shrines—what of it?"

"Then you must share your discovery with me," said the gambler, in impressive tones, "and I will tell you why: I own that buried city. I am a descendant of Montezuma, the last chief who reigned over Anahuac, when Cortes gained domination over Mexico. From him a tradition came down through our family, that when Catholicism wiped the Aztec nation and religion out of existence, a band who fled from Istaccihuatl (White Woman) mountain, to those of Tepe Suene, formed their city in the subterraneans they made, and amassed therein all the riches and splendors that signalized the halcyon days before the invaders came from Spain. The City of the Golden Skulls was lost in oblivion, as to location. But it has been assiduously searched for, from one generation to another of my family, for its location was lost far back in

the anterior ages. I am the only heir to the City of the Golden Skulls!"

"Menteral!" interposed a voice at this juncture close behind Mexican Paco.

"Ha!" he cried, springing up, and wheeling around, while Dick burst out laughing.

"It is Leon Santa Anna!" exclaimed Dick, "and he says you lie!"

Behind the glib-tongued gambler stood another Mexican, in native costume, who wore a short pair of side whiskers like his countryman.

"*Maldiciones sobre su alma!*" exclaimed Paco, in a towering passion.

"Mad, eh?" said Santa Anna, with a sneer. "Well, Senor Lyons, he is a fraud. He heard that story from my lips, and is trying to impersonate me!"

"Then, you, Leon, are a descendant of the ancient Montezuma?" asked Dick.

"Yes, senor. I am the last of the Toltecs! Paco, your plan to impersonate me is foiled! Go!"

When he was gone, Dick turned around, faced Leon, and asked:

"Did you tell the truth, Santa Anna?"

"By my mother!" exclaimed the Mexican, raising his tall, big brimmed hat.

Dick was strongly inclined to believe Leon.

He had once been befriended by the Mexican, when in great distress.

"If, then, you are a real claimant to the treasure I have discovered," said Dick, "meet me to-morrow, and I will take you to the Toltec temple."

"I am very grateful to you," said Santa Anna.

The next day broke clear and sunshiny, and Dick and the Mexican mounted two sure-footed little mules, and started off on their mountain journey. When they departed, Mexican Paco went off after them on foot like a shot.

The trail which Dick pursued led miles upon miles through the gulch, and then took an abrupt turn to the right, when it wound sharply up the mountain side. Then they reached a rough ledge, overlooking the hills and plains far below—the path being hardly broad enough for two equines to go abreast. They traversed this risky road, until it came to an abrupt end. A sheer descent from the termination fell two hundred feet, and before they reached it they disappeared from Mexican Paco's sight, in round a jutting rock, the giant having become confused and taken the wrong trail, going off at an angle from the ledge in pursuit of them.

"We are at our journey's end," said Lyons.

"But I see nothing of an entrance to the temple," said Leon in surprise.

"Of course not. But look here!"

He leaned against what looked like the solid rock, and it receded, showing a huge arched doorway opening in the face of the cliff.

They passed in, leaving the mules out on the ledge, and Dick ignited two lanterns. Their vague light disclosed a huge cavern, with a tunnel at the end, which they passed through, and traversed some distance.

Then they stepped out into another cavern one hundred feet in height.

Its diameter was indistinguishable. In the center stood a large building of stone, queerly shaped, fancifully carved, having several windows, and but one door. It stood on a plateau, rising up from a great black hole in the floor.

"There," said Dick, pointing at the building, "is the Toltec temple, from which I procured the gold skull which I brought to the assayer."

"*Madre de Dios!* But how did you get in?"

For answer Dick flung the snaky coil he had slung on his arm, it whizzed across the yawning gulf, the noose of the lariat caught a projecting rock, he fastened the end he held, and then secured the second on his arm.

He swung himself over the abyss and crossed hand over hand, the tough line bending like a bow with his weight. The Mexican followed tremblingly.

A weird, strange scene met their view.

Before them was a huge idol—the Toltec Mars—to whom not only were fruits, flowers, perfumes and songs offered up by the ancient Toltec heathen, but twenty thousand human lives were annually sacrificed to appease the terrible deity.

The idol itself was of huge proportions, and was covered with gold and silver, wrought in the forms of human skulls and hearts, the waist was girt about with thick golden serpents, and close by stood incense braziers of the same precious metal.

All about were fire censers, lamps, columns, and curious ornaments scattered about, all made of gold and silver, singularly wrought, and every embellishment upon the ugly idol was of the same precious metal, molded and engraven in thousands of hieroglyphical devices.

"What do you intend to do?" asked the Mexican.

"We will despoil this place of its riches, fling them across the chasm, and when everything is over, go across ourselves, gather them up, and bring them to Rocky Bar where they can be converted into bank notes."

They then set to work, and kept at it hour after hour, heedless of fatigue, until they had nearly finished, when an accident occurred to Leon.

In tearing a skull from the idol he fell and sprained his arm.

It was very late in the afternoon, so they desisted.

Dick tied one end of the spare lasso around the Mexican's waist.

"Now cross over," said he. "If you should fall, owing to your arm being weakened, I will be able to hold you with this, which I will fasten to my body."

The Mexican nodded and started on his perilous journey. He reached the other side in safety, then Dick came across. When he reached the middle the lariat suddenly broke!

There came a frightful concussion as he was hurled against the side of the abyss, beneath where Santa Anna stood holding the lariat, which was fastened around his waist. But though badly bruised he did not let go.

He rebounded from the wall and returned, getting a few more cuts and bumps, but his clutch on the lariat did not relax a trifle.

There he hung, fifteen feet from the top, and heaven only knows how far above the bottom of that black chasm.

"Leon!" he shouted. "Hurry away on one of the mules to procure help."

Assured that his friend was safe for the present, Leon hurried down the passage, dropping his lantern, dashed through the cavern, and forcing open the rocky door, he hurried out on the ledge, sprang upon the back of one of the two mules, and turned its head around to retrace his steps back to Rocky Bar.

But he had not gone a dozen paces when Mexican Paco sprang out from behind a niche in the face of the wall of the cliff, confronting him.

Before Leon could alight, Mexican Paco laid one brawny hand upon the mule, and exerting all of his herculean strength, he gave the beast a shove that sent it over the edge of the precipice. Santa Anna threw one arm around the animal's neck, a cry of horror burst from his lips, and the next moment both mule and rider disappeared down the yawning abyss!

The Mexican then entered the cavern, and seeing the tunnel ahead of him, he plunged in, little dreaming of where he was going.

On he went, as lightly as a cat, striving to pierce the darkness ahead with his sight.

Suddenly Mexican Paco reached the edge of the chasm.

Not knowing anything about it he fell over.

A frightful yell burst from his lips, his eyes started from their sockets, he threw out his hands in a wild but futile endeavor to save himself, then down he went like a shot—right over Dick's head.

There came a jar on the lariats just then.

Mexican Paco's hands had come in contact with them, and he seized them.

They were both hanging to the lariats then.

"*Ave Maria santissima!*" yelled Paco. "Save me!"

"Why, that is not the voice of Leon!" muttered Dick in amazement. "It is Mexican Paco, and the rascal in falling over has caught the lariats!"

The Mexican was lodged a few feet above him, where the wall bulged, and in his frantic efforts to climb up, his body had swung around so that it was now wedged in between the lariats and the protruding wall.

This was a fortunate circumstance for Dick.

As the rope was thrown further out, he could now very easily climb to the top, and immediately proceeded to do so.

When he reached the Mexican, the rascal seized hold of him and tried to clamber up on Dick's body to reach the edge of the precipice, only eight feet above their heads. Divining his intentions, the young miner began the same tactics, and a furious struggle was the result.

The lariats, to which they each clung with one hand, swayed back and forth, over that dreadful height, and they panted hard and fought like tigers for the supremacy. Suddenly one of the lariats broke!

The Mexican uttered a hoarse cry, and slid down a few feet.

Dick jumped upon his shoulders, and bounding upward, caught the remaining lariat up higher. Then he swung himself aloft, caught the edge of the rock, and pulled himself up out of danger.

There came an awful shout of horror as the other lasso broke, and the end whizzed by him, dealing him a blow that fairly stung, and he knew that Mexican Paco had gone to his doom, down in the bowels of the earth!

Hurrying from the cavern, he found the remaining mule, and saw where the earth had been freshly broken away from the edges of the cliff.

Looking down, he saw what had happened to the unfortunate Santa Anna and the poor mule. Both of the bodies lay down in the ravine below, lifeless.

Returning to the cavern he found the lantern Leon had dropped, which he ignited, and gathering as much of the treasure as the mule could stagger under, he went back to Rocky Bar. Here he disposed of it, but did not mention the fate of the two Mexicans. Several more trips were made to the Toltec Cavern ere he had recovered all of the treasure, and the last time he went there an earthquake shock shook the mountain. He saw the ancient temple falling to pieces, and narrowly escaped with his life.

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